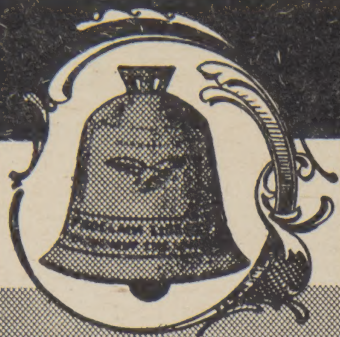




THE LIBERTY

BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 168 WEST 23D STREET, NEW YORK

No. 764.

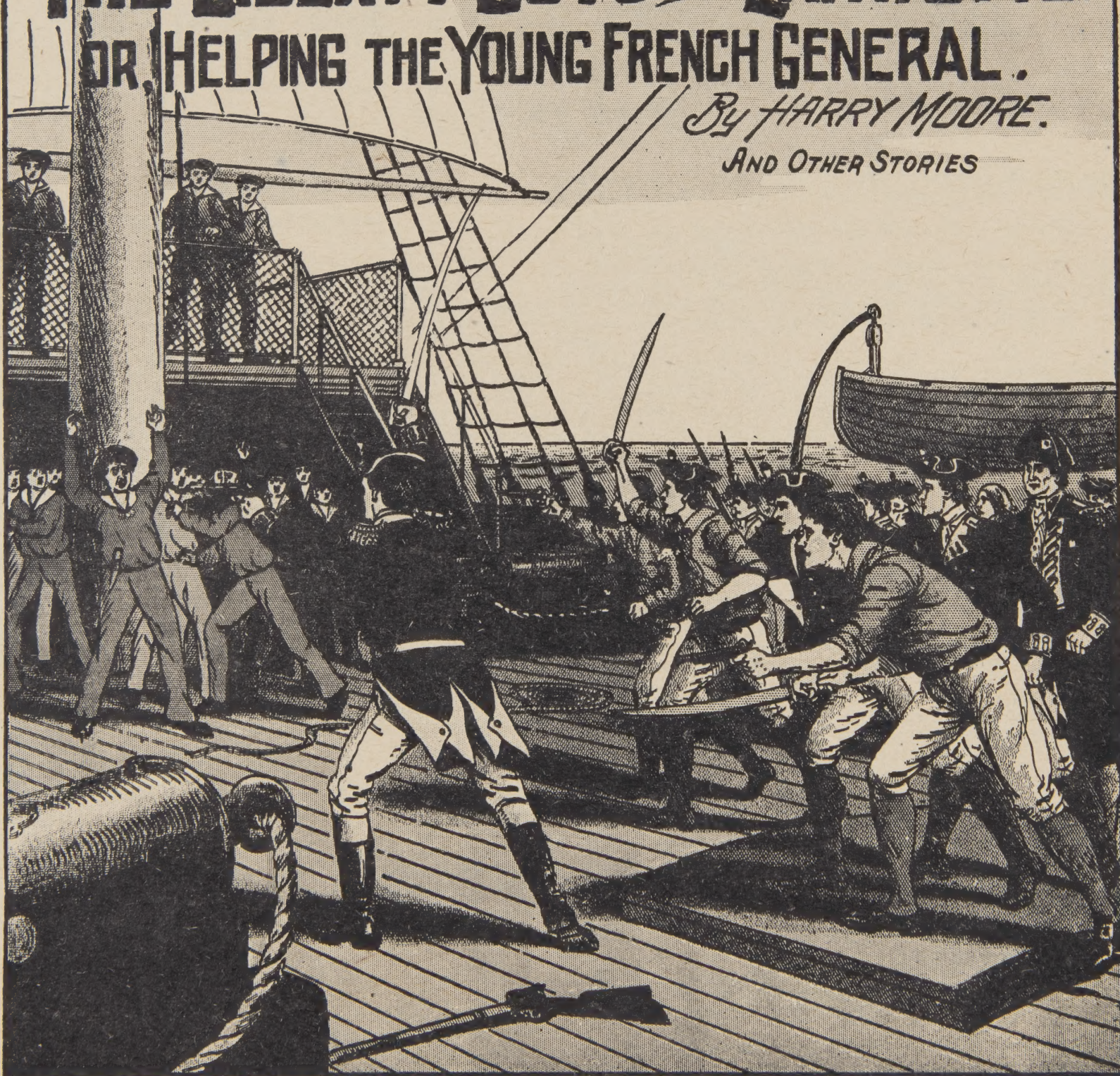
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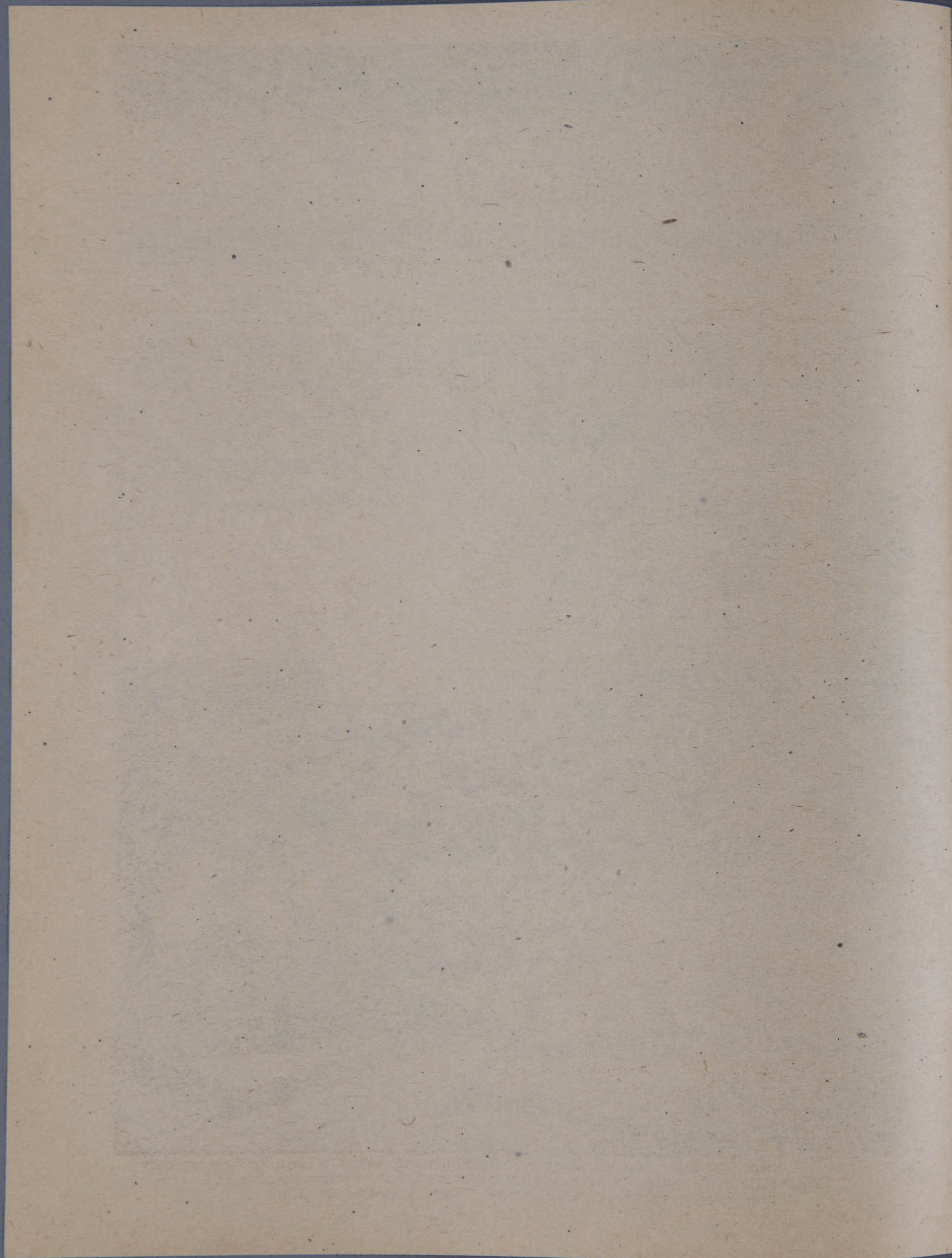
THE LIBERTY BOYS AND LAFAYETTE! OR, HELPING THE YOUNG FRENCH GENERAL.

By HARRY MOORE.

AND OTHER STORIES



"Surrender!" cried Dick Slater, waving his sword. "Surrender and return to your quarters, or die!"
The leader of the mutineers threw up his hands, and said something in French.
"They have surrendered!" cried Lafayette. "You have quelled the mutiny."



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The Liberty Boys and Lafayette

— OR —

HELPING THE YOUNG FRENCH GENERAL

By HARRY MOORE

CHAPTER I.

THE LIBERTY BOYS EXCITED.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Dick."

It was the first week in February of the year 1779.

The war of the Revolution had been in progress three years, and many hard battles had been fought, but just now all was quiet in the North.

The British, under General Clinton, occupied New York City, and the patriot army was extended in a long cordon of forces in a semi-circle from Danbury, Connecticut, through White Plains and around to Elizabeth, New Jersey.

The main force was at White Plains, and General Washington had his headquarters there.

And on the February morning of which we write Dick Slater, the famous young captain of the Liberty Boys of '76 had been summoned to headquarters by the commander-in-chief.

General Washington looked at Dick for a few moments with an air of interest; then he said:

"Dick, you have done a great deal of good work for me during the three years that you have been in my army."

The youth blushed and said, smilingly:

"I am glad that you think so, sir."

"You have done splendid work as a scout and spy," went on the commander-in-chief; "I never sent you in quest of information in vain. You always returned with something of interest to tell me."

"I always did my best, your excellency."

"Your Liberty Boys, too, have done splendid work for the great cause, my boy."

"They have done their best, I am sure, sir."

"Yes; I have always found that I could depend upon them, and I assure you, Dick, that I have appreciated the services of yourself as a scout and spy, and of your Liberty Boys as fighters on the battlefield."

"I am glad, sir, that we have been able to so conduct ourselves as to earn your notice, much less your approbation."

"You have done so well, as I have said, that I have decided to give you a proof of my appreciation, Dick."

The great man paused and looked at Dick impressively.

"Thank you, sir," said Dick, seeing that the commander-in-chief expected him to speak.

The great man was silent for more than a minute, and then he said:

"Dick, as you no doubt know—for you are a bright young man—we have long been trying to get the French to render us aid to the extent of sending fleets and armies over here."

Dick bowed.

"I know that; yes, sir," he replied.

"Well, progress has been slow; our commission in Paris has

not been able to do as much as I hoped would be the case, and I have decided to send General Lafayette to Paris to aid the commission."

Again Dick bowed. He did not know what was coming.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"General Lafayette wishes to go home to visit his family, anyway," the commander-in-chief went on; "and I have given him permission to go, with the understanding that he is to do all he can to get the king of France to send us the aid we need."

"Yes, sir," said Dick.

"General Lafayette will want a bodyguard or escort, and I have decided that you, Dick, and some of your Liberty Boys shall go with him in that capacity."

Dick started. His face lighted up with pleasure.

"Do you really mean that we are to go to France with him, sir?" the youth asked, eagerly.

The commander-in-chief bowed.

"Yes, Dick," he said.

Dick was delighted, and his face plainly showed this.

He was glad to go to France with Lafayette!

He could hardly believe it.

He almost thought that he was asleep and dreaming.

But, no, he was in headquarters, and there sat the commander-in-chief looking smilingly at him.

It was no dream; he was wide awake.

"Nothing could please me more than to be permitted to accompany General Lafayette to Paris," said Dick. "I did not expect ever to get across the ocean."

"I thought you would enjoy it, Dick. That is the reason I selected you. Another reason is, I have perfect confidence in your bravery and discretion, and know that you will be of considerable assistance to General Lafayette."

"Thank you, sir; when will we start?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"Where is the ship that he is going on?"

"It lies in the Sound, off Danbury."

"How many of my Liberty Boys shall I take, your excellency?"

"Suit yourself about that; I should say that four of you would be sufficient."

"Very well, sir."

At this moment there came a knock at the door.

"Who is there?" called out the commander-in-chief.

The door opened, and an orderly was seen standing there.

"What is it?" asked Washington.

"General Lafayette is here, sir."

"Show him in."

The orderly bowed and withdrew, returning shortly and announcing:

"General Lafayette."

The next moment the young French general entered the

room. He seemed little more than a boy, his face being as smooth as that of a girl. Indeed, he was only twenty-one years of age—only a couple of years older than Dick Slater.

Generals Washington and Lafayette exchanged greetings, after which the latter shook hands with Dick, whom he knew well, they having campaigned together in the South.

"General Lafayette," said Washington, "in making the trip to France you will need a bodyguard or escort, and I have just told Captain Slater that he and some of his Liberty Boys shall go with you."

The boyish face of General Lafayette lighted up.

"Nothing could please me more," he said. "Dick, I shall be delighted to have you accompany me."

"And I shall be delighted to go, General Lafayette."

"Begin making your preparations at once, Dick," said the commander-in-chief. "Remember you leave here day after tomorrow morning at an early hour."

"We will be ready, sir."

Then Dick saluted and took his departure.

"That is one of the bravest and brightest young fellows I have ever known," said General Washington, when Dick had gone.

"You are right, your excellency," agreed Lafayette; "Dick Slater is certainly one whom you can trust."

"So he is."

"Yes, indeed; and you could not have selected any one who would have been more acceptable to me as a companion on my trip across the ocean."

Meanwhile, Dick was making his way back toward the quarters occupied by the Liberty Boys. They had quarters in a large, ramshackle building down in the village of White Plains, that had been used for a storehouse.

When Dick entered the building he found the youths sitting around telling stories and enjoying themselves as best they could.

It was evident, however, that they were not very well satisfied with the situation. They were young, and liked action, but for several months now they had not had anything to do. They were growing dissatisfied and restless.

"Hello, Dick! Where have you been?" asked Bob Estabrook. Bob was Dick's right-hand man; indeed, the two had been chums all their lives. Their homes were within a quarter of a mile of each other, not far from Tarrytown, and the youths had been together a great deal. Then, too, Alice Estabrook, Bob's sister, was Dick's sweetheart, and Edith Slater, Dick's sister, was Bob's sweetheart, this being another bond of sympathy between them.

"I have been to headquarters," replied Dick.

The youths all looked at Dick inquiringly, and Bob asked:

"What did the commander-in-chief want?"

Dick smiled.

"You would never guess," he said.

"Then tell us," grinned Bob.

"All right; he is going to send me to France."

The youths stared open-mouthed. They were so amazed that they could not say a word for a few moments.

Bob was the first to find his tongue.

"What's that you say, Dick?" he cried; "the commander-in-chief is going to send you to France?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Is that so, really?"

"You're just joking."

"Why should he send you there?"

"I guess you don't mean it, Dick."

"Yes, I do!"

The youths saw that Dick was in earnest, and they hardly knew what to think.

"When are you going?" asked Mark Morrison.

"I will start day after tomorrow morning."

"So soon?"

"Yes."

"Are you going alone?"

"No; I am going with General Lafayette."

"Oh, that's it, eh?" exclaimed Bob. "I remember now that I heard he was going."

"Yes."

"And you are going with him?" from Sam Sanderson.

"Yes; so the commander-in-chief said."

"Jove, I wish that I could go, too," from Bob Estabrook.

"And I!"

"And I!"

Nearly all the youths gave utterance to such a wish.

"Well, some of you are going to have your wish gratified," said Dick.

"How is that?" in eager chorus.

"I am to take three of you along, and the four of us are to act as an escort, or bodyguard, for General Lafayette."

"Let me go, Dick!" cried Bob.

"And me!"

"I want to go!"

"And so do I!"

There was a babel of cries. All the youths were eager to go.

"I can take only three," said Dick, when the youths had quieted down; "and I have no way to decide whom the lucky ones shall be, save by drawing lots."

Bob Estabrook's face fell. He was such a dear friend of Dick—they were such chums, in fact, that he felt that it would be the finest thing in the world if he could go. But at the same time he realized that it would not be right for Dick to show partiality, and that to decide the matter by drawing lots was the only fair way, and he said so.

The others said the same.

"Let's settle the matter at once, Dick," said Bob; "I'm eager to know my fate. If I'm to go I want to know it, and if I'm to be forced to stay behind I want to know that, too."

"It's the same with the rest of us," from George Fulton.

So Dick wrote numbers, from one to one hundred, on slips of paper, and placed them in his hat and shook them up, mixing them thoroughly.

"Now each fellow draw a slip out of the hat," said Dick; "the three who get the three lowest numbers—one, two and three—will be the ones to accompany me."

He passed around and each youth drew a slip.

Bob was the tenth one to draw, and when he looked at his slip he gave utterance to a shout of delight.

"I've got number three!" he cried. "Hurrah! I'm going to France!"

The other youths looked at Bob almost enviously, and then congratulated him.

Mark Morrison was the next youth to get one of the lucky slips, he getting number two.

"Only one more slip in the hat," said Dick; "now, who is to be the lucky man?"

"That's what we are all wanting to know," said George Fulton, as he reached into the hat and drew forth the slip. He looked at it, and then gave utterance to a yell that would have shamed an Indian.

"I've got it!" he cried, waving the slip; "I've got number one! I'm the lucky man! I'm going to France!"

"You act more like you vos goin' graziness, alretty," growled Carl Gookenspieler, who was disgusted because he had not been one of the lucky ones.

"Shure an' did yez t'ink thot yez would be afther goin' to go wid Dick, Cookyspieler?" asked Patsy Brannigan, in a tone of supreme contempt.

"Und vy nod?" belligerently; "I vos haf shoost as much righd as vat enny oder vun haf, und dot is so."

"Yis, but phwat could yez do, Oi dunno?" with a grin; "yez would be afther bein' more in dhe way dhan yez would do good."

"Vat do you know about id, Batsy Prannigan? I would do shoost so much good as vat enny vun would do, und dot is der trut!"

"Shut up, you two, or I'll bump your heads together," said Sam Sanderson, threateningly.

"Bob Estabrook, Mark Morrison and George Fulton will accompany me," said Dick. "Well, I congratulate them on their good luck, while at the same time I sympathize with the rest of the boys. I will leave one of you in command of the company while I am absent."

"Oh, that's all right, Dick," said Sam Sanderson. "We would have liked to have gone with you, but all of us couldn't go, and we have no right to feel hard toward those who were lucky."

The others all said the same.

CHAPTER II.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE REDCOATS,

"Well, we're off, Dick."

"Yes; we have started, at any rate."

"That's right; say, I can hardly believe that we are to go to France, old fellow."

"It does seem hard to realize it, Bob."

"I don't believe that I shall be sure that we are to go until after we are aboard the ship and sailing away."

Dick laughed.

"That will be proof that there is some truth about the matter, Bob," he said.

"Yes, so it will."

General Lafayette, accompanied by his bodyguard of the four Liberty Boys, was on his way to the point where the ship lay that was to take him to France.

The little party of five was not alone. Twenty Liberty Boys were with them to see that they got to their destination in safety.

Dick and Rob rode ahead as a sort of advance guard, to do scouting and see that the coast was clear, and behind them were ten Liberty Boys. Then came Lafayette, with Mark Morrison on one side of him and George Fulton on the other, while behind them rode the other ten youths.

It was a cold morning, but not cold enough to cause the members of the party to suffer, and all felt fine. The four youths who were to accompany Lafayette to France were very happy. They could have sung, they felt so delighted by the prospect of crossing the ocean and going to the great city of Paris. This in itself was something that they would remember all their lives.

"I've always wanted to see Paris, Dick," said Bob, after a brief silence.

"So have I, Bob; but I never expected that I would do so."

"It's the same with me."

"There's another city I would rather see, Bob," said Dick, presently.

"What one?"

"London."

Bob shook his head dubiously.

"I would like to see London myself," he said; "but I judge that it wouldn't be healthy for us to go there."

"Not if the fact that we were patriot soldiers should become known," with a smile.

"That's right; well, I guess we won't go to London this time, eh?"

"I guess not, Bob."

Dick spoke slowly and thoughtfully, and Bob, who knew his comrade so well, was sure he was thinking that it was possible that they might visit London before returning to America.

Presently they came to the top of a hill and, pausing, gazed ahead down the winding road.

A mile away in the valley they caught sight of a party of horsemen, whose scarlet coats proclaimed them to be British troopers.

"There are some redcoats, Dick!" said Bob.

"Yes; there must be about twenty of them."

"Just about that number."

"And they are coming this way."

"Yes."

"I wonder if General Lafayette will object to our striking the troopers a blow?"

"I don't know; let's go and ask him."

"You stay here and watch the enemy. I will go and ask the general."

"All right."

Dick rode back and met the party of Liberty Boys.

He told General Lafayette about the redcoats and asked if he cared if the youths ambushed the enemy, and he said no, for them to go ahead.

"You remain back here," said Dick. "I will take my Liberty Boys and go up on the top of the hill and lie in wait for the enemy."

"No; I will stay with you," said the general. "You must not forget that I am a soldier, and if there is to be any fighting I wish to have a hand in it."

"Very well, sir; but you should not forget that you are of more importance than any of the rest of us. You are on your way to France to see your family, and to render assistance to the American commission. It would be a great loss if you were to be killed."

"Oh, I will be in no danger. We will ambush the enemy, and I will be protected by trees and will not run any risk to speak of."

"As you will, sir," said Dick.

He told the youths what was to be done, and they were delighted. They were always eager for a fight.

"Let's get up to the top of the hill in a hurry," said Sam Sanderson.

They rode up the slope at a gallop and were soon beside Bob Estabrook.

"Where are the redcoats, Bob?" asked Dick.

"About half a mile away, Dick."

"Good! Dismount, boys, and lead your horses in among the trees."

The youths obeyed his order at once.

General Lafayette dismounted and tied his horse to a tree, and he and Dick took up positions behind trees, standing within five feet of each other.

"You will have full command, Dick," said General Lafayette; "the Liberty Boys understand you, and will be able to do better work under your command than they would under mine."

"But—" began Dick.

General Lafayette interrupted him.

"There are no 'buts' about it, Dick," he said; "you must give the orders, and I will obey them, just the same as though I were one of your own men."

"Very well, sir; just as you say."

All of the youths had stationed themselves behind trees and were awaiting the coming of the enemy eagerly.

Presently Bob Estabrook caught sight of the soldiers.

"They're coming," he said.

"Ready, boys," said Dick; "remember the signal, and when you hear it let them have a volley."

The redcoats were coming up the slope and seemingly did not suspect that danger was near.

Closer and closer they came.

They were already within musket shot distance, but in order to make sure that good execution would be done, Dick intended to wait until the troopers were opposite the point where the Liberty Boys were concealed.

On came the troopers.

Suddenly one of the horses belonging to the Liberty Boys gave a shrill neigh. This was heard by the redcoats, who brought their horses to a stop instantly.

"Danger!" cried their leader. "Back down the slope, men, as quickly as possible!"

They whirled their horses and started back down the slope at a lively rate. Dick, seeing that they were likely to get clear away, gave the order to fire.

The youths obeyed the command.

The roar of the volley sounded over the hills and through the nearby valleys.

Crash! Roar!

Three or four of the troopers were seen to reel in their saddles, but none fell to the ground. They were wounded, but none had been killed.

"Too bad!" said Bob Estabrook; "that horse of yours spoiled everything, Sam," to Sam Sanderson.

"That's so," in a disappointed voice. "I never knew him to neigh in that manner before."

"Oh, well, it can't be helped," said Dick. "We wounded three or four of the troopers and gave them all a good scare, and that is something."

"So it is," agreed General Lafayette. "I judge that they will keep on going until they get back to New York City."

"Yes, I think so," agreed Dick.

Then they untied their horses, led them forth from among the trees and mounted and rode down the slope in the same direction taken by the redcoats.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE OCEAN.

"There's the ship, Dick."

"I see it, Bob."

"It's a big one, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Is it an American ship, or French?"

"French, I should think, Bob."

"Well, it doesn't matter to me which it is. If it carries us safely across the ocean, that's all we care."

"You're right, Bob."

It was almost sundown.

General Lafayette and his escort had ridden steadily—save for an hour's stop at noon—since morning, and they were now on the top of a ridge about a mile distant from Danbury, Connecticut. To the right and left stretched the beautiful Sound, looking much like a huge river, the wooded slopes of Long Island being plainly visible on the farther side of the Sound. Half a mile out from the shore a large ship lay at anchor, and it was this vessel that had brought forth the exclamation from the lips of Bob Estabrook.

After the encounter with the party of troopers, as told in

the preceding chapter, the Liberty Boys had kept a sharp lookout, but had not again caught sight of the enemy.

General Lafayette's face lighted up when he caught sight of the ship.

"There is the vessel that is to carry me back to my family and sunny France!" he exclaimed.

Then they rode onward, and twenty minutes later were in the town of Danbury.

They went to one of the leading taverns, where they had the best supper the place afforded.

"Are we to go aboard the ship to-night, General Lafayette?" asked Dick, when they had finished the meal.

"Yes, Dick," was the reply. "I have sent word for a boat to be sent ashore for us, and likely it is there now."

This suited Dick and Bob first rate. They were eager to get aboard the ship and get started on their trip.

Dick, Bob, Mark and George bade good-by to their twenty comrades, who wished them good luck and a safe return from the land across the sea.

The twenty youths were to remain in Danbury over night and return to White Plains next day.

When Lafayette and his four young companions reached the dock they found the boat there waiting for them.

They embarked, and were soon moving out into the Sound.

When they reached the vessel they went aboard, and as they did so Bob gave utterance to a sigh of satisfaction.

"We are actually aboard the ship, Dick," he said; "I begin to believe that we are to go to France after all."

Lafayette laughed.

"Did you doubt it?" he asked.

"I was afraid something might occur to spoil our plans," replied Bob. "For a while I was afraid I might wake up."

"Ah, you thought you were dreaming, eh?"

"Yes."

The young French general laughed again. He was feeling very happy, for he was about to embark on the voyage back to his home and to his family.

"It is no dream—thank goodness!" he said. "I should be very disappointed if I were to wake up and find it so."

Then he told the youths to come to the cabin with him.

They went into the main cabin, where they were greeted by the captain of the ship. He was a Frenchman and spoke no English, so he and Lafayette talked in their native tongue. The majority of the soldiers and sailors were Frenchmen, also.

There were not many of the former, for the vessel was not a warship, but a merchantman. There were four cannon, and just enough to man them—that was all.

Lafayette explained this to the youths, after he had got through talking with the captain. That worthy had to go on deck to give orders for getting under way, as the ship was to sail at once.

"I should think it would be a difficult matter to sail up the Sound after night," said Dick.

"We have a pilot on board," replied Lafayette.

"One who knows all the ins and outs and crooks and turns of the Sound, eh?"

"Yes."

It did not take a great while to get under way, but after the ship had started it had to go very slowly. Not much sail was set, and as the wind was blowing almost straight against the ship it was necessary to tack continually.

This made it very slow work getting along, and it was morning when they reached the ocean proper and the pilot got in his little boat and pulled toward the shore.

Lafayette and the four Liberty Boys were on deck, drinking in the scene with eager eyes. It was quite raw and cold, the east wind cutting like a knife, but they were well wrapped up; and they stood and watched the shore slowly recede with feelings of commingled pleasure and pain.

They were sorry to go, yet glad to do so.

"Well, we are now really embarked on the voyage," said General Lafayette.

"Yes," replied Dick. "How long will it take us to get across?"

"Between three and five weeks."

"It takes a long time to get across," said Dick.

"So it does."

"I wonder if I'll be seasick," remarked Bob, in rather a sober voice.

"Quite likely," said Lafayette. "Very few people escape."

"Well, I hope that I will be one of those that do," with a grimace.

The other youths said that they hoped that they would not be sick.

Alas for their hopes! They had not been out in the ocean proper an hour before Mark, Bob and George were leaning over the side of the ship, sick and miserable.

For a wonder, Dick was not sick, and he stood beside General Lafayette and watched the land of his birth slowly sink lower and lower.

"The land seems to be settling right down into the ocean," he remarked.

"Yes; that is the way it looks, Dick."

"Say, Dick," said Bob, "if I—get—much sicker, I—believe—I'll jump—in and—end my—misery!"

"Oh, no; you will be feeling fine by to-morrow," said Dick.

"I won't—be—feeling at—all, to-morrow," said Bob, lugubriously; "I'll—be—dead!"

"Oh-h-h-h-h! So will I!" groaned Mark.

George was too sick to say anything. He simply hung over the side of the ship and paid his tribute to old Neptune without a word of protest.

"Jove, I'd like to do something to help you fellows," said Dick, sympathetically.

"Would—you?" from Bob.

"Of course I would."

"Then—throw—me—overboard! I'm so weak—I cannot climb—up high—enough to—fall over the bulwarks."

"Oh, you will come around all right, Bob; you will feel all the better for this little spell of sickness and will soon be eating enough for two men."

"Ugh!" groaned Bob; "don't—say—anything—about—ugh—eating!"

Dick and General Lafayette could hardly keep from laughing, but the knowledge that the three were suffering intensely caused them to exert themselves, and they managed to keep their faces straight. Had they laughed they would have been excusable, for Bob's actions, as much as his words, were comical, to say the least.

"You were always one of the heartiest eaters when we were at home, Bob," said Dick.

"I know—but—we—aren't at—home—now."

"I—wish—we were!" from Mark.

"Oh, you will get over that soon," said General Lafayette; "you will soon be glad that you are here."

"With—all—respect to—you, I—must—say—that I have my doubts," said Bob.

"They are not in a condition to listen to reason, General Lafayette," said Dick.

"You are right, Dick."

After a while the three felt enough better so that they were able to go to their staterooms, and they lay down and made themselves as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances.

Dick and the general went into the main cabin and sat down and talked for quite a while. Lafayette was telling the youth about Paris, and Dick was a willing and interested listener.

Suddenly there was a commotion, and the sound of excited voices on deck.

The two ceased talking and listened.

"I wonder what the trouble is?" remarked Dick.

"I don't know," was the reply.

"Let's go on deck and see."

"Very well."

They left the cabin and were up the companionway and on deck in a minute.

They saw sailors running hither and thither, and a goodly number were climbing the shrouds and spreading more sails.

"What can be the matter, anyway?" remarked Dick.

"Come over here, and I will ask the captain."

They approached the captain, who was bawling orders, and when he got a chance General Lafayette asked what the trouble was.

The captain answered in French, and Lafayette turned to Dick with a look of excitement, and said:

"A couple of British warships are in sight and are heading this way."

"I see them!" said Dick.

CHAPTER IV.

DICK AS A GUNNER.

Dick pointed as he spoke.

The general looked in the direction indicated and saw two large ships.

They were quite a way off as yet, but were coming straight toward the French ship.

"I guess there can be no doubt regarding their intentions," said the Liberty Boy.

"None whatever," was the reply. "They will capture us if they can possibly do so."

"Well, the question is, can they do so?"

The young French general shook his head.

"That is more than I can say," he replied.

"Ask the captain."

"I will as soon as he has a few moments of leisure."

They approached the captain and stood there, waiting as patiently as possible, and presently the officer had nothing to do, save to look around and see how things were, and then General Lafayette asked:

"Do you think we will be able to escape, captain?"

The officer took up a glass and looked at the two warships carefully for a while before answering, and then he said something in the French language to Lafayette.

"What did he say?" asked Dick.

"He says that we may escape, but that it will be a very close thing, indeed."

"Ah!"

Lafayette and the captain conversed for a few moments, and then the latter had to go somewhere else to attend to something, leaving Lafayette and Dick together.

"The captain says that our ship is a fast sailer," the general said; "but the way the wind is to-day it will be a difficult matter to get away from the enemy."

"It would be bad if we were to be captured almost before we get fairly started," said Dick.

"So it would."

There was a sober look on the general's face.

He took up the ship's glass and looked at the two warships carefully.

He shook his head and handed the glass to Dick.

"It looks dubious," he said.

Dick took a look.

There was a very serious expression on his face when he got through.

"What do you think about it?" asked Lafayette.

"I don't see that we can get away before the enemy will be in range of us," the youth said; "and they will have a very good chance to send us to the bottom."

"But if they fail to damage us seriously with the shots we will have a chance to escape, for the captain says that our ship can outsail theirs under equal conditions."

"I am glad to hear that," said Dick.

"I fear that we could not offer successful fight."

"I am afraid not."

After a little further conversation Dick went into the stateroom occupied by Bob and himself, and said to his comrade:

"Can you get up, Bob?"

A weary shake of the head was the only reply.

"Say, Bob, we are being chased by two British warships!" Dick explained. "You had better get up, for they may send us to the bottom!"

"I—hope—they—will!" was the reply.

"Oh, you mustn't feel that way about it just because you happen to be sick at your stomach, old fellow."

"You'd feel that way—if you—were in—my—place."

"Perhaps I would, Bob; but try and brace up a bit, old fellow. We may have to take to the boats if the British sink our ship."

"No boats for me, Dick; if the ship goes down, I'm—going—with—it."

Dick went to the stateroom occupied by Mark and George and told the two about the British warships. They were in much the same condition as was Bob. They did not seem to care very much if the ship did sink.

Seeing that he could not arouse the interest of the three sufficiently to make them get up, Dick went out on deck again.

Lafayette was still there.

"How does the situation look now?" the youth asked.

The general shook his head.

"As bad as ever," was the reply.

Dick looked at the warships, and noted that they were closer than when he went into the cabin.

"They're almost within range, don't you think?" he asked.

"I should judge so."

The reason the warships were drawing nearer was because they were moving in such a direction as enabled them to get the benefit of the wind much more than was the case with the French ship. They would have to fall in behind presently,

however, and then it would be what is known as a stern chase.

The two warships would be well within range before that, however, and the French ship would have to take chances of being punctured by cannon-balls.

Closer and closer drew the warships.

Presently there was a puff of smoke from the bow of one of the British vessels, followed by a report, and then a solid shot fell within two hundred yards of the French ship.

"Well, the trouble has begun," said Lafayette.

"Yes," said Dick. "That wasn't such a bad aimed shot."

"True; but it may have been more of an accident than anything else."

"I hope that such is the case."

Boom-m-m-m!

A shot was fired from the bow-chaser on the other warship. This shot did not come as close as the first one had done.

Dick glanced back at the gun at the stern of the vessel they were on.

"I wonder why they are not answering with that?" he remarked.

"I don't know," replied Lafayette.

"It looks like a good gun."

"So it does."

"It ought to carry to the British ships."

"I should think so."

Dick was silent a few moments, and then presently he said:

"I wish you would speak to the captain, General Lafayette; I would like to try my hand at that gun. If he will let me have a couple of helpers I will see if I can hit either of those two British ships."

"I'll speak to him."

Lafayette went to the captain and talked to him for a few moments. The youth saw the captain look toward him with a sort of scornful smile on his face.

"He thinks I am presumptuous in asking to be allowed to try my hand at the gun, I think," the youth said to himself.

"Well, if he will give me permission I will try and surprise him—though sighting a gun on shipboard with the vessel rising and falling will be a much more difficult feat than doing the same thing on solid ground."

Presently Lafayette came back to where Dick stood.

"The captain says you may try your hand," the general said; "but I think," smiling, "that he is sure it will be a waste of ammunition."

Dick nodded.

"I judged so from the look on his face when he was talking to you," agreed Dick.

"I have some doubts regarding your ability to damage the enemy, Dick."

"Well, I am not sure that I can do so; but I wish to try. I am a good gunner on land, but the ship moves up and down, and this will make it a difficult matter to do good work."

"Yes; it takes years of experience to enable a man to do good work with a cannon on shipboard."

Just then one of the warships fired another shot, and almost immediately afterwards a second shot came from the other warship.

Dick now made his way to the stern, and was joined there by two French gunners.

Lafayette accompanied Dick, to act as interpreter, Dick not understanding French.

The captain stood near at hand, a smile on his face, and the sailors were looking toward Dick, they also having smiles on their faces. It was evident that none of them had much faith in Dick's abilities as a gunner.

This did not worry Dick, however. He was a youth who had plenty of confidence in himself, without being in the least bigoted, however.

He told General Lafayette to tell the two gunners to load the cannon. The general did as requested, and the two helpers went to work.

They quickly loaded the cannon and stepped back. Dick took up his position behind the gun and sighted it.

He took considerable time, and was very careful, for he knew that the captain and all the sailors were watching him. He wanted to make the first shot tell, if possible. If he could do so the half scornful smile resting on their faces would quickly be changed to a look of respect.

At last he was ready.

He gave the word and one of the helpers fired the gun.

Boom!

All hands watched eagerly to see what would be the effect of Dick's shot.

They were not kept long in suspense.

The ball struck one of the masts on one of the British warships and, cutting it in two, brought it down to the deck. A lot of ropes, sails, etc., came trailing after it.

Cries of surprise and delight escaped the lips of the sailors. Dick's two helpers stared at the warship and then looked at Dick with an air of admiration and respect.

"Bravo!" exclaimed General Lafayette; "that was a good shot, Dick."

The captain seized his glass and looked at the warship. He could see the British sailors and soldiers running hither and thither. They seemed to be greatly excited. Some had secured axes and were cutting the broken mast free from the entangling ropes and sails.

General Lafayette walked over to where the captain stood, and said:

"What do you think of the young American now, captain?"

"It was a good shot, but probably an accident," was the reply.

"It is possible that it was an accident," replied General Lafayette; "but I have known the young man a long time, and know that he is able and efficient in anything that he tries to do. I will not be surprised if he does some more good work."

"I hope that such will prove to be the case."

By this time the two assistants had reloaded the cannon and again Dick sighted it.

He waited until the proper moment, and then gave the command to fire.

Boom! roared the cannon.

All watched eagerly.

Then a cry of delight went up from their lips.

The ball from the cannon had cut a mast in two on board the other warship.

CHAPTER V.

AN ANGRY SAILOR.

Such marksmanship had never been witnessed by the French captain or any of his sailors.

Their gunners were very indifferent marksmen, and seldom hit anything, no matter how often they fired, or how fair a mark they had.

"A splendid shot, General Lafayette!" cried the captain, again bringing the glass into use. "Please extend to the young American my compliments and congratulations on his most wonderful marksmanship."

General Lafayette told Dick what the captain had said, and the youth simply bowed to the captain and smiled.

The two assistants were busily engaged in reloading the gun. They worked with alacrity now, for they knew that the youthful American was a splendid gunner, and would make the shots tell.

There was great excitement on board the British warships, and soon their gunners were firing as rapidly as possible, and the solid shots began falling in close proximity to the French ship.

"This is rather dangerous," said Lafayette to the captain; "they are likely to send us to the bottom, don't you think?"

"They will have to do it pretty quickly then," was the reply. "Your young friend has crippled them to such an extent that they will be unable to keep in range very long."

"That's so; I notice the distance between us seems to be widening."

"Yes; we are drawing away from them."

The gun had been reloaded by this time, and again Dick sighted it carefully.

When he was ready he gave the order to fire.

The gunner's mate obeyed.

Boom-m-m-m!

This shot was almost as effective as the rest. Indeed, it did more damage, for it killed three men and wounded several. The ball struck the ship's rail, cut it in two, and went on across the deck and out at the port side. The splinters wounded some of the British marines.

The French sailors gave cries of utterances of admiration when they saw that the last shot had done some damage in the ranks of the enemy.

The firing was kept up now, as rapidly as possible, both by the British and by Dick. One shot from the British guns went through one of the topsails, but did no material damage. Several dropped within a few yards of the vessel, but did not hit it.

Dick did not hit the British ships every time he fired, but he hit them often enough so that his work could be regarded as very effective, to say the least, and he had earned the admiration of the captain and the majority of the sailors.

Bob came on deck at last. He was pale and weak, and had to hold to something to keep from falling.

"Hello, Bob; how are you feeling?" asked Dick.

"Not—very—good, Dick."

"You couldn't stand it to stay in your stateroom while there was something of this kind going on, eh?"

"Well, you—see, I—thought that—maybe—if I—came out—here, a—cannonball would—hit—me."

Dick could hardly keep from laughing.

"Oh, you wouldn't like it if you thought a cannonball were going to hit you, Bob."

"I—don't—know—about—that."

The distance was gradually widening between the French ship and the British warships.

Dick's shots had crippled the warships to such an extent as to make it impossible for them to move as rapidly as they had been moving; and it was now a stern chase, with the enemy falling slowly but surely behind.

Bob began to brace up presently. He was past the worst part of his sickness, and the cold air had an invigorating effect on him.

He was soon looking and talking almost like his old self.

"So you beat the British at their own game, did you, Dick?" Bob asked, when he had seen how matters were.

"So it seems, Bob."

"Well, I'm glad of it. I tell you, the Liberty Boys are hard to beat."

"Old Neptune seemed to have an easy time knocking you and Mark and George out," remarked Dick.

"That's so; but he will down most any one the first time they come up against him, old man."

"Yes, I suppose that is true."

"You were lucky, Dick."

"That's so; I'm glad that I wasn't sick, for then I would not have had the chance to do what I have done."

"It has been a good thing for all of us, I guess, for you fixed the British ships so that they could not overtake us."

"The captain thinks we could have run away from them, anyway."

"Well, we might have done so, and then, again, we mightn't."

"That is true," said General Lafayette, who had been listening to the conversation.

Dick had ceased firing, for he had found that the shots did not carry to the British ships, and there was no use wasting ammunition.

The British were still firing, but their shots fell short, also.

It was so cold on deck that Dick, General Lafayette and Bob went into the cabin. Here they found Mark and George, who were beginning to recover from their illness. The two were able to talk, and were told what had caused the firing.

The captain came into the cabin presently, and, using the general as an interpreter, again congratulated Dick on his good work with the gun.

"The British have given up the chase and are beating back," the captain said.

"That is good," said the general.

"Yes, and it is all owing to your young friend here."

"I judge that is the truth."

When the general told Dick that the British warships had given up the chase and were turning back he said that he was glad of it, and then he and Bob went on deck and watched the vessels sailing away, as best they could, each with a mast gone.

While they were standing there a great, big, burly, fierce-looking sailor, with a face that was villainous, to say the least, approached, and after looking insolently at Dick for a few moments, he said, in broken English:

"Ha! You t'ink you are ze great gunner, young Meester Americaine—eh?"

The youths looked at the speaker in surprise.

Dick met the fellow's gaze calmly and coolly. He recognized that for some reason the man had taken a dislike to him. He did not know why, but the truth was that the fellow had been deemed the best gunner on the ship, and he was jealous because Dick had done such good work.

His name was Jules Bertrand, but was more often called "Black Jules," though when the "Black" was coupled with his name it was when he was not in hearing.

"Why, no; I don't think I am such a great gunner," replied Dick calmly.

"I know bettaire," growled the big fellow; "you haf—vat you call heem—ze conceit. You t'ink you are such a great gunner."

"See here," said Dick, speaking calmly, but with an effort; "why have you taken it upon yourself to come here and talk insultingly to me? What have I done to you?"

"Nothing—yes, nothing. You haf taken ze gun—ze gun vat I haf always had charge of, and you haf made yourself disliked by me doing zat."

"Oh, that's what ails him, Dick," said Bob, who was itching to hit the big fellow. "He was the gunner, and it made him mad when you took the gun and did so much better than he has ever been able to do."

"Eet was all accident—ze shooting you haf done," said Jules, frowning fiercely.

"Perhaps so," said Dick. "Call it accident if you like. I don't care."

"But I care," said the sailor; "my shipmates zey haf make much laugh at me, an' say zat I am not worth much, an' zat I cannot shoot good."

"That is nothing to me," said Dick. "Have it out with your comrades."

"You are to blame, Meester Americaine; you haf come here an' haf done zis gunner work vat I haf always done, an' you haf made me ze unpleasantness."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Dick curtly. He did not like the fellow's looks, and he was not disposed to waste much politeness on him.

The air, tone and words of the youth were somewhat of a surprise to the man, evidently. Presently he found his voice, and growled out:

"Ze young Americaine is a fool. Eef you know Jules Bertrand bettair, you would hesitate before you talked to heem in ze tone of insult."

"Bah!" said Dick, snapping his fingers in the fellow's face, and still further angering him; "you are a big boaster and I will inform you that your size does not alarm me in the least."

"That's the way to talk to him, Dick," said Bob, greatly delighted.

The dark face of the big Frenchman grew darker still, and a fierce look appeared in his eyes. His great hands clenched and unclenched.

"I haf a good mind to choke ze life out of you, young Meester Americaine!" he hissed.

Dick was tired of listening to and looking at the fellow, and he said, curtly and shaply:

"Just try it if you like, you big, black-faced scoundrel!"

This was more than the man had been looking for, doubtless, for he nearly had a fit, he was so enraged by the youth's words. He gasped and gurgled, tried to give utterance to words that would have relieved his feelings, but failed.

"I think he will fall dead in a few minutes, Dick!" said Bob, with a grin, and this had the effect of arousing the big fellow and making it possible for him to speak.

"Dog of an Americaine, I vill haf your life for ze grand insult vat you haf put upon me!" Jules cried; "I vill tear your tongue out by ze roots an' throw eet to ze fishes!"

Then he made a grab at Dick.

CHAPTER VI.

BLACK JULES' DISCOMFITURE.

Dick Slater was on his guard, however.

He did not let the fellow get hold of him. He leaped quickly back out of the way and laughed at Jules.

"You were not quick enough," he said. "You are as slow and awkward as you are ugly."

A hoarse roar of rage escaped the lips of the fellow, and he leaped toward Dick and made a clutch at the youth's throat.

Dick evaded the other easily, however. He did not intend to let the big fellow get a hold of that kind.

"He would choke me to death, sure enough," the youth said to himself.

The sailors had crowded forward and had surrounded the three. They were deeply interested in the affair, though the majority of them were unable to understand what was said.

They could read the looks and actions of the two, however, and knew that there was to be an encounter between the black-browed, burly Jules and the bright, handsome American youth long before it really began.

"Don't play with him, Dick," urged Bob. "Go in and knock him flat as quickly as possible."

"He cannot do zat," growled Jules.

Again he rushed toward Dick, and this time Dick stood his ground.

To the surprise of all the spectators, Dick caught the burly Frenchman by the wrists, held him in spite of all his struggles, and then, with a wonderful exhibition of strength, hurled the fellow back, sending him reeling and staggering almost through the ring of sailors.

Exclamations of amazement and wonder escaped the lips of the spectators.

It was evident that they had not expected to see anything like this.

And there was reason that they should be amazed. Dick did not look as though he were more than ordinarily strong, and the manner in which he had handled Jules was wonderful, the sailors thought.

"Knock him to pieces, Dick," said Bob; "don't fool with him. He is too big and dangerous."

"Oh, he can't hurt me, Bob," said Dick.

"Don't be too sure of that. If he gets hold of you he may be able to hurt you, for he is as strong as a bull."

"So am I."

"You are not as strong as him, Dick."

"I just proved that I am, didn't I? I held his wrists in spite of all that he could do."

"I know that; but in a hand-to-hand encoun—" The rest of the sentence was lost, for at that moment the big sailor rushed at Dick, giving vent to some exclamations in French as he did so.

Instead of trying to grasp the youth this time, he struck at Dick with all his might.

Dick leaped backward and warded the blow off. Then, quick as a flash, his right fist shot out, and, catching the man fair between the eyes, knocked him down with a great crash.

Exclamations went up from the lips of the spectators.

"Good!" cried Bob. "That's the way to treat such fellows!"

"You haf heet him ze very hard blow," said one of the sailors, a few of whom could speak broken English.

"Yes, I hit him fairly hard," said Dick calmly. "If he does not behave himself, however, I will hit him harder next time."

Jules had lain as though dazed for a few moments, but now he scrambled to his feet and rushed at Dick with a snarl like that of a wild beast.

"I will keel you, dog of an Americaine!" he almost shouted.

That he would do this, if he could, was evident. He was beside himself with rage.

He struck at Dick rapidly with both fists, and when he failed to land a single blow he was so angry that he almost foamed at the mouth.

"Give him a good one, Dick!" cried Bob; "don't let him have all the fun."

Dick had been busy evading the rushes and blows of the burly antagonist, and had not done anything on the offensive. Now, however, he decided to go in and do something, as Jules was becoming winded.

"All right, Bob; I'll fix him now," he said.

Then he attacked the fellow so fiercely as to force him to take the defensive at once.

It was something that the other sailors would not have believed possible had they not seen it with their own eyes. Dick forced the big fellow backward in spite of all he could do. The youth fairly rained blows upon Jules' head, face, neck and chest.

They were not so very hard, however, compared to what Dick could strike. He was merely waiting his opportunity, and presently it came. Like a flash the youth's right fist caught the sailor on the jaw, and down the fellow went, with a crash.

It was heard within the cabin, and the captain, General Lafayette and Mark and George came running up on deck to see what had happened.

The captain called out something in an excited voice. It was evidently an inquiry regarding the affair, for one of the sailors answered quickly, speaking in a nervous, excited tone of voice.

Dick's blow had been a very hard one.

He had delivered it with the intention of knocking his opponent senseless, and had succeeded.

Black Jules lay motionless where he had fallen.

"What have you been doing now, Dick?" asked General Lafayette.

"Teaching a brute a lesson, sir," was the reply.

"Well, I must say that he seems overcome by the knowledge that he has acquired," said Lafayette, with a smile. "What was the trouble about, anyway?"

"Well, so far as I can gather, the fellow was the chief gunner aboard the ship, and it made him mad because I took charge of the gun in the affair we had with the British warships."

"Oh, that was it, eh?"

"Yes; he came and spoke insultingly to me, and finally we got mixed up a bit, with the result that he fell down and hurt himself."

General Lafayette smiled and Bob Estabrook laughed outright.

"Dick helped him fall down, General Lafayette," grinned Bob. "He hit the fellow a clip that would have put to shame the kick of a healthy mule."

"Jove, I don't see how you ever did it, Dick," said Mark Morrison. "He looks as if he was as strong as a bull."

Meanwhile the captain had issued some orders, and four of the sailors now seized the unconscious man and bore him forward and down into the forecabin, where they threw water in his face and finally brought him to.

At first he did not know where he was or what had happened to him.

He had been placed in his bunk, and he sat up and glared at his comrades in a wondering, questioning manner.

"Where am I?" he asked presently; "and what has happened?"

He spoke in his native tongue, of course; and one of the sailors told him what had happened.

"Ah, I remember now," he said; "that young American struck me and knocked me down."

"So he did."

The big fellow wrinkled his forehead and seemed to be pondering. Presently he looked inquiringly at his companions, and said:

"How did he do it?"

All shook their heads.

"It is a mystery," replied one. "I would never have thought that a mere boy like him could have got the better of you, Jules."

"I would never have believed it myself; and—I don't understand it, even now."

"The young American is certainly a wonderful fellow," said another.

"Yes, yes!" in chorus from a number.

Jules looked fierce as a thundercloud.

"He got the better of me this time," he growled; "but he will not do it again. Just wait. I will settle with the young American dog! You will see!"

"The captain will get after you, Jules, if you are not careful," said one.

"That for the captain," snapping his fingers. "I do not care for the captain. He does not give us enough to eat, and the food is not good, even then. If you boys would only agree to stand by me we would make him—"

He paused and looked at his companions with a flashing, inquiring look. Some of them nodded as though they understood and approved of what Jules had intimated; without saying it outright, and others looked somewhat frightened. Others still were non-committal, so far as expressions went.

The truth was that Jules was a chronic thorn in the flesh of all the captains with whom he had ever sailed. He was always stirring up trouble, and he managed to keep the crew in a discontented state of mind. Coming over from France they had almost mutinied, and now Jules was hinting that if the men would stand by him there would be a mutiny.

The majority of the sailors were very well satisfied, but one man—especially if he be a ringleader—can often make others dissatisfied, and it was so in the case of Jules Bertrand.

The captain learned that he had recovered consciousness and was himself again, and he sent word for the sailor to be brought before him in the cabin.

A few minutes later the big, black-browed sailor stood before the captain. He was sullen-looking and defiant.

The captain looked at the man sternly, and said:

"Well, what does this mean, Jules? Why did you pick a quarrel with a passenger? Answer me."

"I didn't pick a quarrel with him," replied Jules sullenly.

"You lie!" said the captain. "I have it from the young man himself, and from his comrade that you did pick a quarrel with him, and some of your own comrades say the same."

Jules was silent, though it was evidently only by a great effort that he was able to refrain from saying something rash

"What right had the young American to come aboard this ship and take charge of the gun?" he asked presently.

"Oh, that's the trouble, is it?" the captain exclaimed. "You are angry and jealous because the young man did the firing at the British warships instead of you."

"And why not? Am I not your regular gunner?"

"Yes; but you are a very poor gunner, Jules, and you know it. The young man did good work and crippled the warships, enabling us to escape easily. Had it been you they might have captured our ship."

"I do not think so."

"Well, it doesn't matter what you think. You are to be placed in confinement three days, on bread and water. Take him away, men."

The man started to utter a protest, but he was waved to silence, and his companions led him away. He was placed in a small, dark compartment in the hold and left there—to brood and plan to get revenge on both the captain and the youth who had given him such a severe lesson.

CHAPTER VII.

QUELLING A MUTINY.

"The captain says that we are going to have a storm."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Well, I have often thought that I would like to see a storm on the ocean, but I am not at all sure that I want to be in one."

"It is the same with me."

General Lafayette and Dick Slater were standing on the deck of the ship about the middle of the afternoon, two days after the one on which occurred the events already narrated.

They had noted that there was a cloudbank in the northwest, but had not paid much attention to it. The captain had beckoned to the general, who had gone over and talked to the officer a few minutes, and it was on returning to where Dick stood that he uttered the words with which the chapter begins.

The two noticed that the sailors were swarming aloft and taking in sail, and this showed that the captain thought that the storm might be a severe one.

Presently Bob, Mark and George came up and joined the general and Dick. They noticed that the sailors were taking in sail, and their curiosity was aroused.

"What is that for?" asked Mark.

"Has the ship been traveling too fast to suit them?" asked Bob, with a grin.

"Look yonder," said Dick, pointing.

The youths looked in the direction indicated.

"Do you mean the cloud?" asked George.

"Yes."

"Well, what of it?" asked Bob; "are we going to have a storm?"

"Yes; that is what the captain says."

"Ugh!" half groaned Bob. "I see where I am going to have another tussle with Old Daddy Neptune."

"Jove, I hope it won't make me sick again," said Mark.

"That's what I hope, too," said George.

"It may not make you sick," said the general.

"It may send us all to the bottom, though," said Dick.

"Well, that wouldn't be nearly so bad," said Bob, with the utmost soberness.

General Lafayette and Dick laughed.

"Seasickness must be very unpleasant," said Dick.

"You just try it once," said Bob, "and if you don't say it is the worst sickness you ever had, or that anybody could have, then I will not say another word."

"I would rather take your word for it than to try it," said Dick.

"That is where your head is level."

The sailors were working like beavers, but the cloud was coming up rapidly and there was need of swift work.

The men got the sails all furled in time, however; but not all had got back to deck when the storm burst.

General Lafayette and the four youths had taken up their positions near the companionway leading to the cabin, so that they could beat a hasty retreat if they wished to do so.

They held on to the mast and to some guy ropes, and maintained their position on deck; but it was about the wildest scene they had ever witnessed.

The wind whistled, shrieked and roared through the rigging, and the ship leaped and plunged.

The man at the wheel—or the two men, rather, for it took two to hold it—got the vessel headed straight before the storm, and it leaped forward like a racehorse, even though under bare poles.

The ship reared and plunged and careened from side to side. The waves dashed over the rail, first on one side and then on the other.

It was certainly a wild and fearful scene.

The general and his four companions watched as though fascinated.

It was all they could do to maintain their positions. They had to hang on with all their strength.

The five remained on deck an hour, and then, as the storm seemed to be increasing in violence, and as they were getting stiff with cold, they went into the cabin.

"Well, this is an experience that I shall never forget," said Dick.

"I will never forget it, either," said Bob; "nor will I ever forget how sick I was."

The captain came into the cabin presently to get a drink of something warming, and he told the five that it was as bad a storm as he had seen in years.

"There is no danger that the ship will founder, is there?" asked Lafayette.

The captain shook his head.

"I hardly think so," he replied. "Still, there is always more or less danger."

The ship did weather the storm successfully, although the storm did not go down until away past midnight.

Next morning was clear and bright, and the sailors set the sails and the ship headed away on her course.

Everything went smooth for several days, and then trouble began brewing.

Jules Bertrand had been released from confinement, and just as soon as he was among the men again he went to work to get them to mutiny.

He was determined to get control of the ship, and then he could take revenge on the captain and Dick Slater as well.

The men began to grow sullen, and this was noticed by the captain. He asked the first mate what the trouble was, but the officer could not enlighten him.

"I guess they are just feeling out of sorts," was the reply. "I don't think that their actions mean anything."

The captain was not so sure about the matter, but did not say anything more at the time.

He watched the men as closely as possible, and it did not take him a great while to make out that Black Jules was the one who was causing the dissatisfaction among the men.

The captain at once summoned Jules before him and warned him.

"You have got to stop breeding discontent among the men," he said sternly. "If you do not I shall place you in confinement and keep you there until we reach France, and then I will hand you over to the authorities as a mutineer."

Jules promised to behave himself, but he did not keep his promise. He simply exercised greater care, and was more diligent than ever in his work of arousing the sailors to the pitch of mutinying.

Try as he would, however, he could not get all the men to fall in with his plans. There were about a dozen of the sailors who were unwilling to enter into the conspiracy to mutiny and seize the ship.

When he found he could not get these to go in with those who already had been persuaded over, Black Jules told the dozen that if any one of them dared whisper a word of the affair to the captain his life would pay the forfeit.

He believed that his comrades stood in such fear of him that they would not dare betray him, even though they were unwilling to go into the affair.

But in thinking thus he was mistaken. Since the day on which he had been thrashed so signally by the young American the sailors had not stood in such awe of him. His being beaten by the youth had destroyed his prestige and taken away most of his power.

The day had been set for the mutiny, and on the morning of the day in question one of the sailors who had refused to enter into the conspiracy went to the cabin and told the captain what was in the wind.

"So that is their plan, eh?" the captain exclaimed. "Very well. Forewarned is forearmed, and we shall be ready for them."

The sailor explained that there were twelve of them who were not in the affair, but who would be on the side of the captain and the officers.

"Very well; hold yourselves in readiness to take up your position with us when the time comes," instructed the captain.

The sailor said they would do so, and went back to his work.

The captain told his first and second mate what was in the wind, and then informed his passengers of it as well.

General Lafayette at once said that they would help put down the mutiny, and Dick and his three comrades hastened to say the same.

"You may look upon us as volunteers to aid your force in its fight," said Dick.

Of course he said this through General Lafayette, who acted as interpreter.

The captain thanked them and said that he would be very glad to have their assistance.

Bob Estabrook suggested that they summon the would-be mutineers and warn them not to make any attempt to capture the ship; but after considerable discussion it was decided that it would be best to let the sailors show their hands.

"If they do that we will have the right to quell them in any manner we please," said the captain. "We will have the right to shoot them down."

"True," agreed General Lafayette, and he explained this to the Liberty Boys.

"All right; let them start the thing, then," said Bob; "then we will stop it."

They got their weapons out and cleaned and oiled them, after which the pistols were carefully loaded.

The captain, General Lafayette and Dick had swords, and these would come in good play at close quarters, if it came to a hand-to-hand fight with the mutineers.

The captain now went up on deck to keep a lookout for trouble.

It might come at any hour of the day.

All was quiet till noon, however, and there had been no suggestion of mutinous conduct on the part of any of the sailors.

"Probably it is the calm before the storm," said Dick, as they were discussing the affair at the dinner table in the cabin.

"Yes, that is likely," said General Lafayette.

About the middle of the afternoon the storm broke.

At a signal from Black Jules the sailors that were in the conspiracy suddenly seized belaying pins and marling pikes and rushed toward the cabin.

The captain, General Lafayette and the four Liberty Boys ran forth from the cabin and took their places beside the first and second mate. The twelve sailors who were not in the conspiracy came running aft and joined the little party, and thus the affair did not look to be so unequal after all.

Black Jules was the only one who had a pistol, and he flourished the weapon and yelled out something in French.

The captain answered in a stern, commanding voice, but it had no effect, save to enrage Jules, who suddenly leveled his pistol and fired.

The bullet struck the captain in the shoulder, and he fell to the deck with a groan of agony.

Dick Slater had a pistol in his left hand and his sword in his right hand.

He had been taking a liking to the captain, and was so angry when he saw the officer go down that he leveled his pistol and fired quickly.

It was a quick shot, but a good one, and Black Jules went down with a bullet through his shoulder, while cries and groans of pain and rage escaped his lips.

Then Black Jules said something to one of the mutineers, and the fellow stepped forward and took his place as leader of the party.

He yelled out something, but it was evident that he was not very confident. The Liberty Boys had leveled their pistols, as had General Lafayette, and the mutineers did not like the looks of those weapons.

"Surrender!" cried Dick Slater, waving his sword. "Surrender and return to your quarters, or die!"

The leader of the mutineers threw up his hands and said something in French.

"They have surrendered!" cried General Lafayette. "You have quelled the mutiny."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHIPWRECK.

The captain was taken to his stateroom, and the ship's surgeon dressed the wound. It was not as serious as had been thought at first, but it was painful, and the officer would have to be careful.

Black Jules' wound was more serious. He was taken to his bunk in the forecabin, and when the surgeon had finished with the captain he went and dressed the sailor's wound.

"Will I get well?" asked Jules.

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "I will bring you around all right, so that you will die at the end of a rope."

The wounded man glared at the surgeon, but said nothing. He was just beginning to realize that he was in a serious predicament.

The sailors had dispersed and gone to their work as soon as their leader had surrendered, and in accordance with the captain's orders, none of them was arrested.

"They are all equally guilty," the officer said; "and it is plainly impracticable to arrest all, so we will arrest none."

Dick was complimented by General Lafayette and the captain on the part he had taken, and he was given the credit of having been mainly instrumental in quelling the mutiny.

It was his shot that had brought down Black Jules and ended the affair, for Jules was the ringleader, and as soon as he went down the courage of the rest oozed out and they were ready to give up.

Bob declared that he was not satisfied.

"We are getting rusty for lack of practise in fighting," he said, "and when we were about to have a chance to do some fighting Dick put a stop to the affair suddenly, and we didn't have anything to do at all."

"Oh, well, you need some rest, Bob," said Dick. "You have done enough fighting for a youth of your age."

"I don't think so."

"Well, just be patient, and when we get back to America we will have a chance to do a lot of fighting."

"Yes," agreed General Lafayette; "if I succeed in what I am going to do we will take a strong army back with us, and we will have all the fighting that we want."

"I hope you will succeed," said Bob.

"So do I."

A week rolled away, and the captain was able to be up and around again. Jules was getting better rapidly, too, and would soon be able to get up and around. His wrists were kept manacled, for he was looked upon as a dangerous customer.

Two days later another storm came up.

It was worse than the first one, if possible, and it lasted longer. The ship was driven toward the south and east at a great rate of speed.

The storm held out two days, and was still raging, and the captain examined his charts and took observation as best he could, and shook his head dubiously.

"We must be somewhere near the coast," he said; "and if the storm does not let up soon we are likely to be dashed on to the rocks."

This was not very pleasing intelligence.

General Lafayette and the four Liberty Boys looked at each other with a blank expression on their faces.

"Say, that sounds sort of discouraging, eh, boys?" from Bob.

"Yes, indeed," replied Dick; "perhaps, though, we may not have to try swimming in the ocean," and he glanced inquiringly at the captain.

That officer could not understand Dick, but Lafayette quickly repeated what Dick had said, and the captain shook his head, a dubious look on his face.

"There's no knowing what may transpire," he said; "it may be well to hold yourselves in readiness to act quickly, if the occasion requires."

This was food for thought, and the general and the four youths discussed the situation earnestly.

The captain made frequent trips up on to the deck, and each time he looked more sober when he returned.

Just as darkness was coming on the lookout called down from aloft:

"Land ho!"

"Where away?" asked the captain.

"Dead ahead!"

The captain at once gave orders that were calculated to do something toward averting the threatened disaster, if carried out, but it soon became evident that it was going to be impossible to keep the ship from going ashore. The wind was roar-

ing at a great rate, and the ship was plunging onward, in spite of the effort to get it to sail away from the danger. She had a small keel, and the power of the wind caused her to drift to the leeward rapidly.

The captain came into the cabin, a sober look on his face.

"I see no help for us," he said; "we are bound to go on the shore. The ship is doomed! You gentlemen may as well come on deck and be in readiness to take to the boats when the crash comes."

Lafayette translated the captain's words for the youths' benefit, and they looked at one another with dismay written on their faces.

"Well, well!" said Bob. "This is something we did not reckon on when we left America!"

"No, indeed," from Mark Morrison; "just think of our being wrecked on an unknown coast."

"Come!" said Lafayette, and the five followed the captain on to the deck. They had gathered their valuables from out of the staterooms, and were ready for what might transpire.

Darkness had settled down over the scene, and all that could be seen was the white foam of the great waves that broke over the ship's sides.

The sailors were frightened, and went around in silence. They obeyed the orders given by the captain, but it was in a listless fashion, as though they realized that there was not much chance of doing anything.

"How long will it be before the crash will come?" asked General Lafayette, and the captain shook his head and said:

"It may come at any moment; you see I have the men stationed ready to lower the boats at my command."

It was a scene that the Liberty Boys would never forget.

They had never thought of such a thing as that they would be in such a position as the present one, and in spite of the fact that death threatened them, they were interested.

They knew that there was a chance that they might escape with their lives, and as long as they had a chance they were not disposed to complain.

The captain told General Lafayette which boat he and his four companions would be expected to enter, and they made their way over and took up their position near it.

The minutes passed slowly.

Every man on board was on a strain.

Black Jules had been brought on deck, and his arms were now free. It was felt that under such circumstances he should be given a chance for his life.

The ship was drifting and being blown toward the shore broadside on, and although her speed was not so great as might have been expected, it was sufficient so that there would be a great shock when she struck.

Presently the blow came.

There was a rasping, dragging feeling all along the deck of the ship at first, however, and this was caused by the keel of the vessel scraping on sloping rocks. This slackened the speed of the ship sufficiently so that when she did strike the rocks the shock was not so great as would have been the case otherwise.

Instantly all was confusion.

The captain shouted orders, and the sailors obeyed them as best they could.

The boats were lowered, and the sailors piled in as rapidly as possible.

General Lafayette and the four Liberty Boys got into the boat that had been assigned to them, and the captain and four of the sailors followed. Then the boat moved away from the doomed ship, the sailors having seized the oars and began rowing.

The water was very rough, but as soon as the boat got across the breakers the water became calmer, and half an hour later a landing was effected.

As soon as they were safely ashore the members of the party gave utterance to exclamations of thankfulness.

"We are all right after all," said Bob, "in spite of the fact that we have been wrecked on a foreign shore, we are alive and in very good spirits."

"I wonder how the men in the other boats fared?" said Dick.

"Hard telling," said Mark.

They hunted along the shore for the boats, but failed to find any of them.

They remained there more than two hours, then the captain said they might as well go.

"The boats foundered," he told General Lafayette. "They would have reached the shore long ere this otherwise."

"Where shall we go?" was the query.

"I see lights up the slope," was the reply; "and I think that

they must be in the city of Cadiz, if we were wrecked on the Spanish coast."

"Ah, you think so?"

"Yes."

"I hope so," said the general.

"Yes; if such is the case, then you can go to Paris by land."

"So we can."

They set out and walked up the slope.

It was hard work, for it was dark, and they were unfamiliar with the lay of the land, and their progress was slow.

They persevered, however, and at last came to the edge of what was evidently a good-sized city.

"Do you recognize the place?" asked General Lafayette; "or, have you ever been in Cadiz?"

"Yes, I have been in Cadiz," replied the captain; "but I have not seen enough of this place as yet to make up my mind as to whether it is Cadiz."

Presently they were traversing a main street of the city, and when they asked a man what the name of the city was he replied that it was Cadiz.

"I thought so," said the captain.

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTURED BY BRIGANDS.

There was great excitement in Cadiz that night when the citizens learned that a large sailing vessel had been wrecked on the reefs off the harbor.

Great crowds of people walked along the beach, and looked for the boats that had not come ashore when the captain and his party left there.

About midnight several dead bodies were washed ashore, and this proved that one, at least, of the boats had foundered.

One of the dead men was Jules Bertrand.

They were buried the next day, and then General Lafayette and his four comrades got ready to leave Cadiz.

They engaged the services of a guide, hired horses, and mounting, rode away.

The guide was a villainous looking fellow, Dick and his three comrades thought; but General Lafayette said that the fellow was probably like a singed cat—not so bad as he looked.

"I hope that such is the case," said Bob, with a grin. "If he were really as bad as he looks I would be afraid to be around him."

"That's the way it is with me," said Mark.

"He looks like he would kill a fellow for a bit of silver," said George.

"It's lucky he doesn't understand English," said Dick, with a laugh.

Had he been where he could get a good look at the face of the guide he would have seen a peculiar look there, and he would have been suspicious that the man did understand what was said.

The scenery in Spain is picturesque in the extreme, and the youths enjoyed it immensely.

"So far as we are concerned, we would be willing to spend a month riding through the country," said Dick; "but, of course, you are in a hurry to reach Paris, General Lafayette."

"Yes; I am eager to get home and see my family."

They rode at a good pace most of the time, for the horses they bestrode were hardy beasts, and used to traveling over the rough, mountainous country.

They passed through Cordova and pushed on, arriving finally at Madrid, where they spent the third night after leaving Cadiz.

When they were ten days out from Cadiz they entered the Pyrenees Mountains, the summit of which is the boundary line between Spain and France.

They were riding along late in the afternoon of the day they entered the mountains, and were nearly to the top of the slope, when suddenly they found themselves confronted by a dozen fierce looking men, who held leveled pistols.

"Halt!" cried the leader of the party, in fair English. "Stop where you are!"

"Hello! What have we struck now?" exclaimed Bob.

"Brigands!" replied General Lafayette.

"So that's what the gentlemen are, eh?"

"Yes; without doubt."

"What do you want?" asked the general, after they had brought the horses to a stop.

The leader of the party did not reply at once, but he addressed some remarks to the guide, who replied promptly,

and there was that in his looks and actions that made the general and his companions suspicious.

"I believe the scoundrel is in league with the brigands," said Bob.

"It looks that way," said Dick.

"If I knew it I would shoot a hole through him, if it was the last thing I ever did," said Bob.

Presently the leader of the brigands again addressed General Lafayette, whom he seemed to regard as the leader of the little party.

"Dismount!" he ordered.

"Why do you wish us to do that?" the general asked.

"It is not for you to ask questions, but to obey orders," was the curt reply.

"Let's fight the scoundrels!" said Bob, who would have been glad to offer battle, no matter if the odds were against himself and comrades.

"We dare not do that," said General Lafayette. "Look behind us."

The youths turned their heads and saw at least a dozen brigands behind them, cutting off their retreat. These fellows held leveled pistols also.

"Jove, I guess we are in for it!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes," agreed Dick.

"You are helpless," said the brigand chief. "If you are wise you will surrender at once."

"What do you say, Dick?" the general asked, looking inquiringly at the youth.

"I think we had better surrender," was the reply. "If we attempt to offer resistance they will fill us full of lead before we can do anything."

"We surrender!" said the general.

"You are wise," was the approving reply; "dismount."

The five did as ordered.

Then the brigand chief spoke to some of his men, and five of them leaped off their horses, and advancing to where the five were, bound their arms together behind their backs and disarmed them.

"Now you will mount again," said the brigand chief; "my men will assist you."

The five were lifted in the saddle, and then the brigands started, with the five men in their midst.

It was quickly seen that the guide was in league with the brigands, for he rode beside the chief, and they talked and laughed as though they were old friends.

"I guess that scoundrel led us right into a trap," said Bob.

"There can be little doubt regarding that," agreed Dick.

"I'd like to get a chance to get even with him."

"The chance may come before we part from him, Bob."

"I hope so."

Dick turned to General Lafayette.

"What will these brigands do with us?"

"Hold us for ransom," was the reply.

"Ah, that is their scheme, is it?"

"Yes."

"Well, they won't get much ransom money for me or my three comrades."

"I fear they know who I am," said the general. "That rascally guide understands English, and he has heard you addressing me as General Lafayette. That proves to him that I am a person of importance, and they will expect to get a large sum as ransom for me."

"I fear that you are right," said Dick.

The brigands soon left the main traveled trail, and struck up a ravine, which led higher up into the mountains.

An hour of this and they emerged from the ravine into a small circular basin, in which were two log cabins, one large and the other a smaller one.

The small one was the abiding place of the leader of the band, and he had the prisoners taken there. They were placed in one corner of the room, and their ankles were bound as well as their wrists.

"Now you will not be likely to leave me suddenly and unexpectedly," said the chief, with a grim smile.

"You must think that you will like our company," said Lafayette; "you are taking great pains to insure our remaining."

"I shall like it if it pays me," was the sinister reply.

"I would like to ask you a question," said Dick. "How did you know we were Americans?—or did you think we were English?"

"One of my spies came ahead of you from Madrid, and told me that four Americans and a French officer were coming. That is the reason that I spoke to you in English, so that all of you could understand."

Then the chief turned his attention to General Lafayette. "You will be able to furnish ransom, I trust, general?" he said, with a positive air and accent.

"I judge that my relatives will be willing to pay out a small sum for my release," was the quiet reply.

"A small sum! I assure you, General Lafayette, that it will take a large sum to secure your release!"

"How large?"

The brigand chief deliberated a while, and his dark, fierce eyes shifted from the general to the four Liberty Boys.

"The American youths are friends of yours?" he asked.

"Yes; they are friends of mine," was the quiet reply.

"You think a good deal of them?" insinuatingly.

"I do," was the decided reply.

"Humph! They are a long ways from home and friends—other than yourself," musingly. "It will be impossible and utterly impracticable for me to communicate with their friends, so unless you are willing to have your friends give ransom for them, the same as for yourself, they must die!"

This was said in a cold, matter-of-fact manner, just as a merchant would make a statement regarding his business affairs.

"I shall be only too glad to have my relatives offer ransom for my companions," said the general.

"Oh, but that would be asking too much of you," said Dick; "it will be enough that they will have to pay ransom for you, General Lafayette."

Lafayette shook his head.

"Would you save yourself and leave the rest of us in the lurch, Dick?" he asked.

"No; of course not," the youth hastened to reply.

"Well, neither would I."

"I am glad to hear that you are willing to stand good for your companions, general," said the brigand chief. "It relieves me of a very unpleasant task. It is necessary for the success of my business to make away with all for whom ransom is not forthcoming; but I have never been able to overcome my antipathy to the work."

"One wouldn't think you would care, to look at you," said Bob, so coolly that the brigand chief looked at the speaker curiously, and a bit admiringly as well.

"You are a rather bold youth," the chief said.

"Why do you think that?"

"Because very few men would care to say to me what you have just said."

"Is that so?"

"Yes; and I am going to overlook it, because you do not know me, and have no knowledge regarding my rules of conduct for those who are prisoners in my hands."

"I am glad you are willing to be considerate," said Bob, but the tone of his voice was such as to indicate that he did not care much about it.

"How much money will your relatives give as ransom for yourself and friends?" the chief asked, addressing General Lafayette.

"I could not say," was the reply; "how much money would satisfy you?"

"One hundred thousand francs!"

CHAPTER X.

THE ESCAPE.

General Lafayette did not seem to be surprised; but the four Liberty Boys did, and they stared at the chief in amazement.

"One hundred thousand francs!" exclaimed Bob. "Great guns! Are we worth it?"

General Lafayette smiled.

"I guess that we are," he said.

"Then you think your relatives in Paris will pay that amount of ransom?" asked the chief.

"I think so."

"Very good. Then you and your friends may rest easy. I will send a messenger to Paris at once, and if he returns with the money you shall be set free to go on your way."

"Hasten matters all you can," said Lafayette. "We are eager to reach Paris."

"I will do so."

The chief then left the cabin, and when he was gone the five discussed the affair earnestly.

"We are in no danger," said Lafayette; "we will be delayed

a few days and will be forced to undergo the inconvenience of being trussed up, that is all."

"But we must try to escape and save your relatives the necessity of handing out so much money," said Dick.

"Yes, that's what we must do," said Bob. "I'm opposed to letting this scoundrelly brigand get the money."

"I don't like the idea very well myself," said Lafayette; "but I hardly think that we can escape. If we were to try to do so it might lead to the death of some or all of us."

"Oh, I don't think that they would kill us," said Dick. "That would be like killing the goose that laid the golden eggs."

"True; but some of these brigands are cruel-hearted, vicious fellows, who will hesitate at nothing."

Footsteps were heard approaching, and the five ceased talking.

A few moments later the chief entered.

"Well, the messenger has started," he said.

"I'm glad to hear that," from Lafayette.

"I shall keep you waiting only so long as it is absolutely necessary, General Lafayette."

"Thank you."

The prisoners were given food, and were made as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

The Liberty Boys were set on trying to escape, and as soon as night came they began trying to get their hands free.

General Lafayette had told the youths that he did not believe it was a wise thing for them to try to escape.

"If we are caught at it," he said, "it might go hard with us."

"But we won't let them catch us at it," said Bob.

"We don't want to let your relatives pay out money for us," said Dick.

"Don't you think of that at all," said the general; "they are well able to pay it, and I am confident that it would have cost them just as much to ransom me alone as for all five of us."

"I don't know about that."

The chief had gone away, where, the prisoners had no means of knowing, of course, and neither did they know when he might come back.

For this reason they made all haste possible, and did their best to get their hands free.

It was difficult work, but at last Dick succeeded in getting free from his bonds. Before he could free his comrades, however, they heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

"He's coming," said Bob, excitedly; "cut me loose, Dick, so I can help you."

But the youth did not have time.

The newcomer was already at the door, and Dick had barely time to get around to where he would be behind the door, when it opened.

The brigand chief entered and glanced at the prisoners by the light of the candle burning on a rude table at one side of the room.

His quick eyes noted that one of the prisoners was not there and, giving vent to an exclamation, he whirled around to find his throat seized in a grip of iron.

The chief was a strong fellow, and he at once began struggling with all his might.

He realized that the grip on his throat was very dangerous, and so directed his efforts toward breaking the hold.

He could not get his breath, and knew that unless he could get his throat free he would be choked.

He therefore struggled desperately.

Dick was a very strong youth, however, and he had a grip of iron.

The brigand chief quickly realized that he was in the hands of some one wholly out of the ordinary.

Another fact he realized was that his prisoners might succeed in making their escape if he permitted himself to be overpowered by the youth.

This made his work as he had never worked before.

It was of no avail, however.

He could not break the hold of his opponent.

He tried to call out, so as to bring some of the members of his band to his assistance, but could not utter a sound, other than a sort of faint gurgle that could not have been heard more than a few yards.

He felt that he was growing weaker.

The other four prisoners, who were watching the struggle with a lively degree of interest, as may well be believed, noted that the brigand chief was getting weak, and Bob said, in a cautious undertone:

"You've got him, Dick! He's getting weak."

"Yes; keep on squeezing his windpipe," from Mark.

"I will," replied Dick.

And he did.

He soon succeeded in choking the chief into a state of insensibility. Then he bound and gagged the fellow, after which he freed his comrades from their bonds.

"We have done well so far," said General Lafayette; "but we have not escaped yet."

"True," said Dick; "but we have a chance to escape."

He opened the door slightly and looked out.

It was rather dark, there being no moon.

He closed the door and blew the light out.

"Now there will be no danger of our being seen, if I open the door," he said.

He opened the door and stepped out into the open air.

He could hear the sound of voices at the other cabin, which was only about twenty yards distant.

"They are probably drinking and playing cards," thought Dick; "I wonder if they have any men on guard?"

There was only one way to find out, and that was by reconnoitering, and he told his comrades to remain in the cabin until he returned.

"Be careful," whispered Bob.

"I will."

Dick made his way to the other cabin and peered in at the window.

The brigands were, as he had supposed was the case, playing cards and drinking.

Dick counted them, and found that they were all there save two.

"Now, I wonder where they are?" was the question he asked himself.

Then he remembered that the chief had sent a messenger to Paris to get the ransom money.

"That accounts for one," he told himself. "Now, where is the other?"

He quickly found out.

At the moment that the query went through his mind he felt himself seized from behind.

The brigand had come around the corner of the cabin only a few seconds after Dick took up his position at the window, and had caught sight of the youth and slipped up behind him and grasped him.

Dick realized that if the fellow gave utterance to a cry all the brigands would come rushing forth, and this would result in the discovery of the attempt at escaping. This would result in the attempt being foiled, for the brigands outnumbered the five so greatly that it would be impossible to stand out against them.

Realizing this, Dick decided to prevent the fellow from giving the alarm, if possible, and he made a grab and got the brigand by the throat.

The youth compressed the fellow's windpipe to such an extent that it was impossible for him to cry out, and, fearing that the noise of the struggle might be heard, Dick began forcing the brigand back and away from the vicinity of the cabin.

Dick was so much stronger than his opponent that he was enabled to do this.

He knew it was only a question of a minute or so before he would have the brigand choked senseless, and he kept on squeezing the fellow's throat and waited patiently.

Suddenly the brigand's legs gave way underneath him, and he sank to the ground.

Dick held to his throat a while longer to make sure work of it, and then he lifted the brigand and carried him to the other cabin and into it.

He quickly bound and gagged the fellow and laid him on the floor beside his chief.

"I think the coast is clear," said Dick; "all the rest of the brigands are in the other cabin, playing cards and drinking, and we will be able to get away, I think, if we are careful."

They made their way out of the cabin and to where the horses were. They bridled and saddled their horses, and then led them around the cabins and out of the basin. As soon as they entered the mouth of the ravine the five mounted and rode onward.

"Do you suppose we can find our way over the mountains and to Paris?" asked Bob.

"We will make the attempt," said Dick.

"If we can keep out of the hands of the brigands till tomorrow we may be able to make our escape," said General Lafayette.

"Well, we can do that, I think," said Dick; "unless they discover our escape right away and come in pursuit."

"That is where the greatest danger lies," said the general.

They heard no sounds to indicate that the brigands had discovered their escape and were coming in pursuit, and three-quarters of an hour later they arrived at the main trail.

They turned to the left and made their way along the trail, and two hours later arrived at the top of the mountains.

"Shall we continue onward, or shall we go into camp for the rest of the night?" asked Dick.

"I think we had better keep on going," said General Lafayette; "our horses are sure-footed, and they will keep to the trail without being guided, so we can get along fairly well at a moderate pace."

"Yes; let's keep on moving, Dick," said Bob; "those rascals may have discovered our escape long ago, and may be coming after us."

"That's so; well, forward it is."

They rode onward down the mountain, and kept this up till about four o'clock, when they decided that it would be safe to stop till daylight.

They tied their horses, after unbridling and unsaddling them, and then lay down on their blankets, and were soon sound asleep.

They were awake by sun-up, and mounting their horses, rode onward down the mountain.

They reached the level country by eleven o'clock, and paused at a farmhouse and took breakfast and dinner at the same time.

"I think we are safe now," said General Lafayette. "The brigands seldom venture down into the level country."

CHAPTER XI.

IN PARIS.

"And that is Paris?"

"That is Paris."

"Good! We are glad to know that we are almost there."

"Say, it must be a great city!"

"And a beautiful one."

"I believe that I would like to live there."

It was a beautiful morning, three days from the time they took breakfast at the farmhouse, after getting away from the brigands and coming safely down out of the mountains.

General Lafayette and his four companions had ridden rapidly, and had consequently made good progress.

The general, being on his native heath, as it were, felt at home, and everywhere along the road he was treated with the utmost consideration and respect.

The sentiment among the peasants and small farmers of France was in favor of liberty, and they were proud of General Lafayette because he had been to America helping fight the British.

All that was necessary was for him to tell who he was, and the best that the homes afforded was immediately placed at his disposal.

The four American youths came in for a good share of attention, for the war between the American people and the British was the one all-absorbing topic of conversation among the people of France at that time.

And now they were upon an eminence a mile from the edge of the great city of Paris.

They sat on their horses and gazed at the city with eager eyes. To the four Liberty Boys it looked beautiful, but to General Lafayette it looked even more beautiful, for it was his home, and his family was there.

"Let us hasten!" the general said, an eager light in his eyes.

They rode forward at a gallop and were soon in the city.

They threaded their way through the suburbs, and at last arrived in the thicker settled portion of the residence district.

Presently General Lafayette turned into a roadway leading through an open gateway and up toward a large, fine mansion standing well back from the street.

The youths brought their horses to a stop, and looked at their companion irresolutely and inquiringly.

"Come along," said the general, making a motion with his arm; "you are my guests, and you must not think of leaving me."

"But what—who lives here?" asked Dick, as they rode up alongside of Lafayette.

"My father lives here," was the reply. "and my family is living with him."

"Ah, indeed!"

The youths saw how eager and excited their companion

was, and they said no more, but rode beside him to the mansion.

Here they dismounted, and servants took charge of the horses.

"Come right in, my friends," said Lafayette, his voice trembling with eagerness.

He opened the door and entered, the four following.

A woman was coming along the wide, magnificent hallway, and as her eyes rested upon the face of General Lafayette she gave utterance to an almost hysterical cry of delight.

"My husband—my darling husband!" she cried, and the next moment she was in his arms, weeping and kissing him, for she was indeed Lafayette's wife.

The four Liberty Boys, impelled by the feeling that they should not be spectators to such a tender scene, entered a room near at hand and took seats.

It happened that the room they had entered was the reception room, so they had done well.

Presently General Lafayette, his face wearing a look of utter happiness, and his wife, also looking supremely happy, even though her cheeks were tear-stained, entered the room.

"Ah, here you are," said the general. "I wish to present you to my wife, the most glorious woman of all France."

Then he named each of the youths in turn, and they were given a splendid welcome by Madame Lafayette.

Presently there were footsteps in the hall, and an elderly couple entered the room.

They were the parents of Madame Lafayette, and they gave the general a warm welcome.

Then they were introduced to the four Liberty Boys, and they gave the youths a royal welcome, indeed.

Lafayette insisted that the youths were to remain with him as long as they were in Paris, and so servants conducted the four to rooms in the second story of the mansion.

Such rooms as these were, and such furnishings!

The Liberty Boys had never expected to see anything like it.

"Jove, these people must be very rich," said Bob.

"There can be no doubt regarding that," said Dick.

Presently there were hurried footsteps in the hall, and a knock sounded on the door of the room Dick and Bob were in.

"Come in," said Dick.

The door opened and General Lafayette entered.

The youths saw that he was eager and excited.

"You remember that the brigand chief sent a messenger to Paris to demand ransom for us from my people?" he remarked.

"Yes, indeed," from Dick.

"Well, the messenger was here last evening."

"Ah!"

"And he is to return this evening!"

There was a world of significance in the general's tone.

"I understand," said Dick, his face lighting up; "you want that we shall capture him."

"Exactly; if he has not heard of our arrival here he will return this evening, and then we can make a prisoner of him. And if we do succeed in capturing him we will turn him over to the authorities, who will make an example of him, and thus prove to the brigand chief that it is not safe to follow such a profession."

"That will suit us," said Bob; "we shall be glad to get even with the chief for capturing us."

"So we will," said Dick.

"It will be pleasing to the authorities to get hold of a brigand," said Lafayette.

"So I should judge," from Dick.

The youths thought the plan would succeed, and said so.

Lafayette was sure it would succeed, and he was in great good spirits.

Shortly after dinner General Lafayette told the youths to get ready to go to the royal palace with him.

"I am going to present you to the king and queen," he said.

Dick and the youths demurred.

"There is no need of our going there, General Lafayette," said Dick. "Really, it will be as well for us to stay away."

Lafayette shook his head.

"Don't be backward," he said, "and above all, don't feel a disinclination to meet the king and queen because they are such. I assure you our king is a different type of man from the one who rules over Great Britain."

The youths finally consented to accompany the general. They were not long in arriving at the royal palace, and were

soon in the presence of the king and queen, to whom the four Liberty Boys were presented.

They were given a pleasant reception and soon felt at ease, for the king and queen were good-natured, and amiable and not at all arrogant or haughty.

The king playfully told Lafayette that, as a punishment for disregarding the royal mandate and running away to America and helping the Americans fight the British, he was to be confined one week in the home of his father-in-law.

Lafayette smilingly said that he would try to endure the punishment as best he could.

The five were there two hours at least, and then took their departure.

"Did the king mean what he said about your remaining in confinement at the home of your father-in-law?" asked Bob.

"Oh, yes," with a laugh. "You see I went to America against his wishes and against his commands, and he must punish me in some way. It would not do to ignore my act of insubordination. So he has given me a punishment that will satisfy court rules and yet not punish me."

"Well, I don't like kings myself, on general principles," said Bob; "but if I were to live under one I believe I would want it to be under this same King Louis."

"It is not so bad," said Lafayette; "but the people of France are much like you Americans. They want to be free, and I feel confident that if you secure your independence the time will come when our people will follow suit."

"I hope so," said Dick.

"So do I!" said Lafayette; "if it can be brought about without the horrors of warfare."

They were not long in getting back to the mansion, and when they had entered General Lafayette told his wife and her parents of the punishment that had been imposed upon him.

"Oh, I am so glad!" said Madame Lafayette; "you will have to stay with me, whether you want to or not."

"You know I want to stay with you," said the general, with a smile.

After a while General Lafayette said to the youths:

"The king's command that I remain in the mansion a week does not apply to you, and there is one thing that you can do that will please you, I am sure."

"What is that?" asked Dick.

"You can go and call on Benjamin Franklin, the eminent American commissioner."

"Yes, we can do that," said Dick. "Where will we find him?"

The general gave him the address, and they took their departure.

Knowing that the youths did not understand French, and fearing that they might have difficulty in finding their way, the general sent a servant along to act as guide and interpreter, the fellow being able to speak English fairly well.

None of the Liberty Boys had ever seen Franklin, but they had heard a great deal about him and felt almost as though they knew him.

It was quite a way to the tavern where Benjamin Franklin was staying, but they got there at last, and entering, inquired for the eminent American.

"Monsieur Franklin is in his room," said the man behind the desk.

"We wish to see him," said Dick.

The man hesitated and looked the youths over with rather a critical and searching gaze.

"Who shall I say wishes to see him?" he asked.

"Tell him that four of his countrymen wish to see him."

"Your names, please."

Dick wrote his name and those of his comrades on a card and handed it to the man.

"Tell Mister Franklin that we have just arrived from America," said Dick.

The man took the card and withdrew. He was gone perhaps ten minutes and then returned with the words:

"Monsieur Franklin will see you."

Five minutes later the four Liberty Boys stood in the presence of Benjamin Franklin.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LIBERTY BOYS AND FRANKLIN.

The Liberty Boys had heard Benjamin Franklin described quite often, so had a pretty good idea as to how he would look. He was a large, portly man, with a benevolent yet keen and shrewd look.

As the youths entered the room Franklin eyed them with interest. It was evident that the announcement that four of his countrymen were to see him had awakened his curiosity and aroused his interest.

"I am glad to see you," he said, shaking hands with the youths. "How happens it that you are in Paris?"

"We were sent by General Washington, sir," replied Dick.

"Indeed?" with a show of interest; "then you should be able to give me some news of General Washington."

"Yes, we can do so, sir."

"Why did General Washington send you?"

"He sent us with General Lafayette as an escort or body-guard to him."

"Ah! Has General Lafayette returned to Paris?"

"Yes."

"When did he get here?"

"This morning."

"Where is he now?"

"At the home of his father-in-law."

"Why did he not come with you?"

Dick explained that the king had ordered Lafayette to remain for one week in the house of his father-in-law, and that he could not for this reason come with them.

"Ah, I understand!" said Franklin. "General Lafayette went to America and took up arms against the British in defiance to the command of the king, and this is his punishment for so doing."

"Yes," replied Dick, with a smile; "and it would seem that the king is not greatly displeased."

"So it would seem; I hope that General Lafayette comes with the intention of doing all he can to aid the American commission in persuading the king to help fight the British and aid the Americans in achieving their independence."

"Such is his intention," said Dick.

"I am, indeed, glad to hear it."

The youths had taken seats, on invitation from Franklin, and now the great man began plying them with questions regarding affairs in America.

The youths answered Franklin's questions promptly and intelligently, and the great man was not long in learning that they were about as bright a quartet of youths as he had ever met.

He was amazed by the knowledge they possessed of the military situation in America, and he asked how it happened that they were so well posted.

Dick explained that they were soldiers, and that they had been in the army three years, during which time they had had considerable experience as soldiers and as scouts and spies. He was very modest in his statements, but Franklin was a shrewd man, and read between the lines. He realized that the four were youths who were far out of the ordinary. This was self-evident, for Washington would not have selected them as members of Lafayette's bodyguard otherwise.

"I am indeed delighted to know you young men," said the great American, after he had talked to them an hour or more. "You must take up your quarters here while you remain in Paris. There is a room only a few doors from this one that is vacant, and you shall have it."

"But General Lafayette has insisted that we must be the guests of his people while here," said Dick.

"No matter," with a smile. "The general has had your company for several weeks now, and it is my turn. I will send word to him that I need you, and it will be all right."

"Oh, yes; and we shall be glad to be here near you, sir," said Dick.

Then he happened to remember that they were to render General Lafayette assistance in capturing the brigand messenger that evening, and he told Franklin that they would have to go back and remain at the mansion until after they had done this.

"Then we will come back and take up our quarters here," he said, in conclusion.

"Very well," was the reply. "I hope you will succeed in capturing the brigand."

"I hope so, sir."

They remained an hour longer, and then took their departure.

They made preparations for the work of capturing the brigand, and by the time they had their plans completed it was supper-time.

Supper over, they waited for the coming of the brigand's messenger.

He arrived promptly at the time he said he would be there, and was conducted to the library.

Here he was confronted by Lafayette and Dick Slater and

his three comrades, who leveled pistols at the fellow's head and told him to surrender or die!

Naturally he chose to surrender, and so stated.

His wrists were bound together behind his back, and then two policemen were summoned and they took the brigand off to jail.

The affair caused considerable excitement in Paris, accounts of it being published in the journals.

Dick Slater and his three comrades at once leaped into fame. They were spoken of with admiration, as being the American youths who had accompanied General Lafayette from America as a bodyguard, and how they had finished up by helping the young French general capture the brigand; also, the story of how Dick had managed to get loose from his bonds, when they were prisoners in the hands of the brigands, and how he had overcome the chief of the band, was told to some of the representatives of the journals by General Lafayette, and the story was published in full.

Naturally the youths were the heroes of the day. They were lionized, and everywhere they went they were followed by an admiring crowd.

The youths were modest, and did not fancy being made so much of, but they realized that the people meant well, and so bore it with as much equanimity as possible.

Franklin smilingly told them that they must learn to accept the penalties that were attached to greatness.

"I was quite a lion for a while," he said. "My picture was in all the shop windows, and the people wore their hair a la Franklin, and wore the same style ties that I am wearing. Crowds used to follow me on the streets the same as they are doing with you now. It will wear off in time."

"I hope so," said Dick.

The week passed away, and then General Lafayette was free to leave the mansion and go about at will. He came to see Franklin the very first thing, and the two had a long talk together.

Lafayette assured the American commissioner that he was going to use his influence to get the king to send an army over to America to aid the Americans in their fight against the British.

"Of course there is some selfishness and the principle of personal interest involved," he said. "We hate the British and want to strike them a blow, and by aiding your people will be enabled to do so. But at the same time, we sympathize with the Americans and hope they will triumph and win their independence."

"We shall be very glad to have your assistance," said Franklin; "and we shall not inquire too closely into your reasons for aiding us."

"So far as I am personally concerned," said Lafayette, "I have gone to America and fought with the patriots for their independence because I am in sympathy with that idea; and I hope to see the day when France will be governed by her people, instead of only by a few."

"I know that, General Lafayette, and your services will always be appreciated and will be remembered by our people."

"I trust so."

Dick and his three comrades came in just then, and the conversation became general.

General Lafayette insisted on telling Franklin some stories of the wonderful fighting that had been done by the Liberty Boys, and of the good work that Dick had done as a scout and spy.

Dick tried to get him to stop, but the general laughingly refused to do so, and the stories he told made Franklin eye the youths with looks of admiration.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK SAVES FRANKLIN'S LIFE.

"Hello, I will listen and see what is under discussion between those two fellows."

Dick Slater was walking along a street in Paris. It was after nightfall, and he had passed a couple of men who were standing back in a doorway conversing in English. As he passed them he heard one mention the name Franklin, and his attention was attracted at once—all the more so, because the two men were evidently Englishmen.

It happened that the place where the two men stood was about the middle of the block, and, there being no lights save at the street corners, it was pretty dark where they were.

Dick had spoken to himself as above, and had then stepped in close to the buildings and stolen back until he was within a few feet of the two men. Here, standing within a doorway, he could hear what was said.

"Do you think he will come back this way?" were the first words he heard spoken.

"I am sure of it," was the reply, from the other man.

"Well, do you think that it will really avail to put Franklin out of the way?"

Dick started.

"Great guns! They are lying in wait for Franklin with the intention of attacking him!" thought Dick, horrified.

"I think so," replied the other man; "Franklin is here agitating the subject of a French and American alliance, and if he were to be put out of the way I think it would put a stop to the negotiations."

"Do you?"

"Yes; he is the head and front of the whole movement."

"Well, it will pay to put him out of the way, then."

"Yes, if the French make an alliance with the Americans they will be able to cause us a lot of trouble."

"True; Great Britain has enough on her hands at the present time, even as it is."

"So she has."

"We will put Franklin out of the way, and it will do our king's cause no harm, if it does no good."

"But I feel sure it will do a good deal of good; it will put a check to negotiations, at any rate, if it does not stop them altogether."

"Yes, so it will."

Dick listened with a feeling of horror.

"So that is what you are going to do, is it?" he said to himself. "You would commit a crime, would you? Well, I will see if I cannot put a stop to that."

Dick knew that Franklin often went to a little coffee house a couple of blocks distant, and he had to pass along this street in returning to his quarters. Likely he would be along soon, and but for the accident of Dick having overheard the mention of Franklin's name by the men the great American might have lost his life.

Even as it was, he was not absolutely safe, for Dick was only one against two probably desperate men.

"They will have to do their work quickly, however," said Dick to himself. "If they don't I shall fix them so that they won't be able to do any harm," and he drew a pistol and took hold of the muzzle and held it in readiness for instant use as a club.

Dick thought of attacking the two at once and thus not giving them a chance at Franklin; but he felt that by doing so he might get himself into serious trouble. They could swear that they had not done anything, and that they had not had any intention of harming any one, and their testimony would be that of two as against one.

So he decided to wait till they made a move to attack the American commissioner, when he could leap out and attack them.

Presently a man was seen approaching. He was quite plainly visible at the street crossing, where there was a street lamp, and it was seen that he was large and portly.

"That's our man!" one of the two said.

"I believe you are right," from the other.

"I know I am."

"All right; get ready for work."

"Remember, no shooting!"

"I know; we must use our knives."

"Yes; the noise of a shot would bring a crowd this way, and we might be captured before we could get away."

"Yes; well, the knives are all we need to use. He is so heavy and awkward that he could not possibly get away from us."

"Right!"

Closer and closer came the man. There was little life on this street, it being a cross street, used after nightfall only by the occasional pedestrian who was in a hurry and wanted to make a short cut. This was how it happened that there was no other person in sight, save the American commissioner, for he it was.

Dick gripped the handle of his pistol and waited.

He knew he would have to act quickly, and that he would have to strike hard and unerringly to save Franklin from injury at the hands of the two.

Presently Franklin was abreast of Dick. Then he passed and was even with the two would-be assassins.

Dick crouched, ready to leap, and watched the two with the eyes of a hawk.

Suddenly the two Englishmen leaped out from the doorway and sprang toward Franklin with uplifted arms, bright-bladed knives gleaming in their hands.

They did not use the knives, however.

Dick Slater was out and upon them in a twinkling.

The hand holding the pistol described a swift circle in the air.

Thud!

The butt of the weapon struck one of the would-be assassins on the head, and he sank to the sidewalk limp and senseless.

The other man was almost upon Franklin. The knife would have descended in another instant, but Dick Slater was ready, and again his hand described a circle in the air.

Thud!

Again the pistol butt had landed fair on a man's head, and down sank the victim, senseless.

Franklin whirled and uttered an exclamation.

"What is the trouble here?" he cried out.

"No trouble now, sir," said Dick quietly, as he returned his pistol to his belt.

"Ah, it is you, Dick?" in a relieved tone of voice.

"Yes, sir."

"And who are those two men you have knocked senseless, my boy?"

"A couple of Englishmen, sir, and they were going to murder you!"

"To murder me!"

"Yes."

"Well, well! Why were they going to do that?"

"They thought that by doing so they would put a stop to the alliance which the British fear will be made between France and America."

"Ah, I see."

"What shall we do with the fellows, sir?"

"I judge that it will be best to hand them over to the authorities."

"Likely, sir."

"You remain here and guard them, Dick, and I will go and bring some officers."

"Very well."

Benjamin Franklin walked hastily away, while Dick stood guard over the two would-be assassins. He did not know but what they might regain consciousness at any moment, and he was in readiness to bind their arms in case this occurred.

Franklin was not gone long, but returned within a few minutes accompanied by two police officers.

The two Englishmen were just regaining consciousness, and they were handcuffed and led off to jail without ceremony.

Benjamin Franklin told the two officers that he and Dick would appear at the court in the morning and prefer specific charges against the prisoners.

"Well, Dick, I owe my life to you," said Franklin, when they were in his room at the tavern.

"I am glad I was on hand, sir," said Dick.

"Those two were desperate men and undoubtedly would have murdered me."

"Yes, I think they would have done so, sir."

The other three Liberty Boys came in just then, and when they heard the story of the attempted murder of Benjamin Franklin they were very much excited.

"Jove, I wish I had been along with you, Dick," said Bob.

"I am afraid it would have gone harder with the Englishmen than it did, Bob," with a smile. "I judge that it is as well that you were not along."

Next day the journals had the story of the attempted assassination of Benjamin Franklin, and told at great length how Dick Slater, the brave young American, had knocked the would-be assassins senseless, thus saving the life of the American commissioner.

Dick was the hero of the hour.

He could not stir without being followed by a crowd, all eager to get a good look at the youth who had, single-handed and alone, conquered the brigand chief, and who had now made himself doubly famous by overcoming two English would-be assassins.

It increased the admiration of the French people for the Americans as a nation. They reasoned that if the Americans were as a rule anything like Dick Slater, they would be valuable allies to have, and it aided in influencing the sentiment in favor of making an alliance with America.

Lafayette came to the tavern and congratulated Dick on his good work.

"If you keep on, Dick, you will do a great deal toward helping me to get my people to form an alliance with your people."

"Well, that is what we came over here with you for, General Lafayette," said Dick. "The commander-in-chief said we were to help you all we could."

Then Lafayette and Franklin began discussing the probabilities of an alliance being made, and Dick and his three comrades went out for a walk about the city.

"What do you think of the prospects?" asked Franklin.

"I think they are growing brighter," was the reply. "I am using all my influence to bring about the alliance."

"I hope you will be able to get the king to consent, General Lafayette."

"I hope so."

They talked earnestly for more than an hour, and then Lafayette took his departure.

Meanwhile Dick and his comrades had wandered into a part of the city that they had never before visited. It was the worst part of the city, and many of the denizens were criminals.

On every hand was squalor and poverty, and vice seemed to flourish. Nearly every other door was the entrance to a low dram-shop, and rough, villainous-looking men eyed the four youths with anything but a friendly gaze.

"Say, I don't fancy the looks of things in this part of the city," said Bob.

"Nor I," from Mark.

"Some of the men look as though they would kill us for a shilling," said George.

"I judge that you are not far wrong, George," said Dick.

"Let's get out of here as quickly as possible," said Mark.

"And we will do well to keep our eyes open until we are out," said Bob.

"Be ready to draw your pistols at the first sign of a hostile movement on the part of any of the denizens of this district," said Dick.

Presently the youths found their way barred by about a dozen fierce-looking ruffians, and among them were two or three that the four were sure that they had seen back a ways. This made them sure of the fact that this was not done on the spur of the moment. The two or three were ringleaders, and had hastened by a roundabout route and had got their gang together and barred the way.

"What does this mean?" asked Dick.

One of the ruffians replied, but it was in the French language, and the youths did not understand what was said. The tone was threatening, however, and the youths could understand that, at least.

"Out with your pistols, boys!" said Dick, and the youths drew their pistols and leveled them.

The instant they did so there was a yell of rage from the ruffians, and then the leader cried out something, and the entire gang rushed upon the four Liberty Boys.

CHAPTER XIV.

BACK IN AMERICA.

Dick realized that it was a case of life or death.

These were desperate ruffians, and they would not hesitate to commit murder in order to get a little money.

"Fire!" cried Dick.

The youths fired promptly.

Each had drawn two pistols, and they fired eight shots in half that many seconds.

Six of the ruffians went down, dead or wounded.

Groans went up from the wounded, and those who were not injured gave utterance to yells of rage.

They attempted to close in on the youths, thinking the latter would turn and flee.

To the surprise of the ruffians, however, the four did nothing of the kind. In stead, they clubbed their pistols and dashed in among the ruffians and struck about them to such effect that the members of the gang were greatly disconcerted.

The Liberty Boys cracked the ruffians over the heads with

right good will, and every time a head was cracked its owner went down as though struck by a sledge hammer.

The Liberty Boys were such effective hand-to-hand fighters that they quickly scattered the ruffians and succeeded in fighting their way through, leaving the majority of their enemies lying on the street.

"Now let's get away from here as lively as possible, boys!" said Dick.

They leaped forward and ran with all their might.

They realized that they were in a dangerous locality, and that within a very few moments' time half a hundred desperadoes might be at their heels.

It was well that they did run.

The pistol shots and groans and yells of the wounded and enraged ruffians brought more men out of every dram-shop on the block.

Soon the street was swarming with them, and catching sight of the fleeing youths, they set out in pursuit.

They were chasing youths who were splendid runners, however. Moreover, the four had got a good start, and they kept increasing their lead.

The people in the streets through which they ran stared at them, and once or twice some ruffians attempted to stop the youths, only to get knocked down for their pains. The Liberty Boys were not to be stopped.

They finally succeeded in getting out of the tough part of the city, and then they slackened their speed to a walk.

"Phew!" whistled Bob; "that is the liveliest time that I have had in a long time."

"It was too lively to suit me," said George Fulton, who had a slash in the arm from the knife of one of the desperadoes.

"Is your wound serious?" asked Dick.

"No; it is only a slight fish wound, but it is somewhat painful."

"Well, we will soon be at our rooms, and we will dress it and ease the pain."

They were not long in getting to their quarters in the tavern, and when Dick had dressed the wound George said it pained him scarcely at all.

When Benjamin Franklin saw George and noted the youth's arm was bandaged he asked what the trouble was. Dick told him, and he shook his head and looked sober.

"You were lucky to get away from there alive," he said. "You must stay away from there in the future."

"We will," said Dick. "We didn't know we were getting into such a dangerous locality until after we had got there then we got out as quickly as we could."

Lafayette came in and heard the story of their adventure. He, even better than Franklin, realized the great risk the youths had taken, and he shook his head.

"You are the greatest fellows to be getting into trouble that I ever saw," he said. "I guess that we will have to tie you up and thus keep you out of danger."

The youths laughed.

"We will stay away from that part of the city in future," said Dick.

Two weeks passed, and the Liberty Boys began to grow restless.

"We have been away from America quite a while, boys," said Dick, one evening, as they were talking in their room.

"Yes, and I am beginning to want to get back," said Bob. "I want to get a chance to fight the redcoats some more."

"And so do I," from Mark.

"And I," from George.

"I am beginning to want to get back myself," said Dick.

"Well, let's go, Dick," said Bob. "We can't do any good here, can we?"

"I think not; I guess we have given General Lafayette about all the help we can, and might as well go."

"Let's go and speak to Mr. Franklin about it," said Mark.

They acted on this suggestion, and when Franklin heard what the youths had to say he was silent and thoughtful for a few minutes. Then he said:

"I believe that it will be as well for you to return to America, and it will give me an opportunity to send a report of what I have accomplished to Congress. You will deliver it into the hands of the commander-in-chief, who will send it to Congress."

"We shall be very glad to do this," said Dick. "How soon will you have the report ready?"

"In about three days."

"Very well; we will be getting ready to start. I wonder when we can get passage on a ship?"

"There is one to sail for America four days from now; you can take passage on that."

"Is that a fact?"

"Yes."

"That will be fine."

Just then General Lafayette entered the room, and when he was told what the youths were going to do he said that it would be as well for them to return.

"I have been unable to get the king to consent to the alliance as yet," he said; "and it may take quite a while, but I am going to stay until I do succeed."

"We can do no real good by remaining here," said Dick.

"True; and you can be of some benefit to the cause by returning, for you can carry Mr. Franklin's report, and also a letter from me to the commander-in-chief."

"We shall be glad to act in the capacity of messengers," said Dick.

"You will be helping me, by doing so," said the young French general.

The youths were in great good spirits after that.

They were going back to America—were going home!

They would have to make the trip to Havre—where the ship lay that was to sail for America—on horseback, and it would take two days, so Benjamin Franklin worked hard and got his report finished in two days.

On the morning of the third day the youths started; and in his pocket Dick carried the report of Benjamin Franklin and also a letter, really a report, from General Lafayette. The letter from the French general was for General Washington, however, while Franklin's report was for Congress.

The four youths were accompanied by an escort of French troopers, and they arrived at Havre about the middle of the afternoon of the day the ship was to sail.

The youths had several hours to spare, but they went on board at once, for then they would be there when the time came for the ship to lift anchor. They were not willing to take any chances of being left behind.

The ship did not sail until about ten o'clock, and then it headed out into the ocean, and was soon moving through the water at a good rate of speed, for the wind was very favorable.

The youths stood on the deck and gazed back at the lights of the town. They watched the lights grow dimmer and dimmer, and at last, when they could see the lights no longer, they went into the cabin and sat down.

"Well, we are homeward bound at last," said Mark.

"Yes, and I am glad of it," from Bob.

"Why did they wait until after nightfall to sail?" asked George.

"They were afraid their departure might be seen by the British spies, who would hasten across the channel and carry the news to London," said Dick; "and then they might try to head us off and capture us."

"That's so; I never thought of that."

The captain and the majority of the sailors were Frenchmen, but there were two or three who could speak broken English. The youths conversed with these latter occasionally.

It was about the middle of April when, one bright morning, the lookout called out something in French, and one of the sailors who spoke English told the youths that land was in sight.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob, dancing about on the deck. "We are almost home again. We will soon be standing on American soil once more!"

About the middle of the afternoon the ship entered Long Island Sound and, taking up a pilot, sailed on down the Sound.

The youths stood on deck and watched the shores with eager interest and delight. They were happy, indeed. They had been homesick, but had not realized it so much as was the case at this very time, when they were practically home again.

"I like France and I like Paris, but I like America better," said Mark.

"America is the place for me," said Bob.

The ship dropped anchor off Danbury, and the four youths were sent ashore at once, as they were eager to feel solid ground underneath their feet again—and especially American ground.

It was dark when they got to the shore, and they bade

good-by to the sailors by shaking hands with them, and then went to the tavern where they had taken supper the evening they arrived there when they were starting for France.

It did not take long for the news to get circulated through the town that the four Liberty Boys who had gone to France with General Lafayette had returned, and a number of officers called to see them and ask about the progress that was being made to effect an alliance with the French people.

The youths talked freely, telling the exact situation, so far as they understood it.

Next morning they secured horses and, accompanied by an escort of twenty soldiers and officers, rode away in the direction of White Plains.

The escort went only half a dozen miles and then bade the youths good-by and went back to Danbury.

The four Liberty Boys arrived at White Plains that afternoon, and their coming was the signal for great excitement in the patriot encampment.

Dick went at once to headquarters and was given a very cordial welcome by the commander-in-chief.

"So you have returned from France in safety, Dick!" exclaimed the great man; "I am glad—very glad!"

"We are glad to get back, sir," said Dick.

"Did you see Benjamin Franklin?" eagerly.

"Yes, indeed, your excellency; and I have here this report to Congress, which he directed me to deliver into your hands."

Dick handed it over and then drew forth Lafayette's letter, saying:

"This is from General Lafayette, and it is for you."

The commander-in-chief opened the letter and read the contents.

He looked thoughtfully at the floor for a few minutes, and then his face cleared, and he seemed to be very well pleased.

"General Lafayette seems to think that he will be able to persuade the king to send over an army to aid us in our fight against the British," he said. "What does Benjamin Franklin think about it?"

"He seems to think that success will crown the efforts of the commission, now that Lafayette is there to aid it," replied Dick.

"Well, I hope that such will prove to be the case."

"I hope so, sir."

Then the commander-in-chief asked Dick for the story of the adventures of himself and comrades, and Dick told the story as briefly as possible. He was very modest, but General Washington could read between the lines, and knew that the Liberty Boys had added to their reputation and done much to earn for Americans the respect of the French people.

He complimented Dick on the good work he and his three comrades had done, and said that he was glad that he had chosen them to accompany General Lafayette to France.

Then Dick went back to the village of White Plains and greeted his Liberty Boys, shaking hands with each and every one of them.

The Liberty Boys were a jolly lot that evening and night—they did not go to bed until past midnight—and the youths had to tell the story of their adventures in France, going and coming.

The Liberty Boys were greatly interested, and many were the exclamations when they heard the four tell about the mutiny, about the shipwreck and about being captured by the brigands.

One and all expressed the wish that they could have been along with the four.

Lafayette remained in France a year and then returned to America, bringing the glad tidings that a large army was to be sent over immediately.

The army did come, and it remained in America and helped to bring about the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

The Liberty Boys had helped the young French general, and in return he helped the people of America to achieve their independence.

Next week's issue will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' GRIT; OR, THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE."

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